

THE GOOD OLD WAY REVISITED:

The Ferrar Family of Little Gidding *c.*1625-1637

Kate E. Riley, BA (Hons)

**This thesis is presented for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy of The University of Western Australia,
School of Humanities, Discipline of History, 2007.**

ABSTRACT

The Good Old Way Revisited: The Ferrar Family of Little Gidding c.1625-1637

The Ferrars are remembered as exemplars of Anglican piety. The London merchant family quit the city in 1625 and moved to the isolated manor of Little Gidding in Huntingdonshire. There they pursued a life of corporate devotion, supervised by the head of the household, Nicholas Ferrar, until he died in December 1637.

To date, the life of the pious deacon Nicholas Ferrar has been the focus of histories of Little Gidding, which are conventionally hagiographical and give little consideration to the experiences of other members of the family, not least the many women in the household. Further, customary representations of the Ferrars have tended to remove them from their seventeenth-century context. Countering the biographical trend that has obscured many details of their communal life, this thesis provides a new, critical reading of the family's years at Little Gidding while Nicholas Ferrar was alive. It examines the Ferrars in terms of their own time, as far as possible using contemporary documents instead of later accounts and confessional mythology. It shows that, while certain aspects of life at Little Gidding were unusual, on the whole the family was less exceptional than traditional histories have implied; certainly the family was not so unified and unworldly as the idealised images have suggested. Moreover, the Ferrars were actively engaged in making those images, for immediate effect and for posterity. The Ferrars' identities, corporate and individual, and their largely textual practices of self-fashioning are central to the study. Other key concerns are the Ferrars' moral and religious ideals and practices, gender in the family, and intra-familial relationships.

Evidence for the thesis is drawn from family documents dating from the early years of the seventeenth century to the time of Nicholas Ferrar's death. The statements and actions captured in them illustrate the energy the Ferrars expended in conforming to their spiritual ideals at Little Gidding, enforcing the pursuit of their programme intensively, and at times defensively, as they negotiated their new circumstances. Contemporary materials of this sort challenge and complement the evidence recorded in the *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*, written by his brother John in the mid-1650s, which has typically served uncontested as the basis for histories of the Ferrars.

Part One of the thesis provides a revised historical perspective on the Ferrars. The apologetic Anglican historiography is interrogated first, followed by an extensive, new

account of the nature of everyday life at Little Gidding based on a range of sources as yet underutilised. The practical organisation and functioning of the household are addressed in connection with the principles that informed its structure and routines. Discussion then turns to religion at Little Gidding, a subject which has received little explicit attention despite more than 350 years' worth of literature proclaiming the family's exceptional holiness.

Part Two concentrates on the written remains of the processes of gendered, spiritualised socialisation and identity formation within the family. The Little Academy is considered first: in this unique dialogue circle, young women discussed morally edifying historical tales, offering them a textually-mediated experience of the world and working to reinforce conventional gender roles and religious values. The final three chapters pertain to the copious and little-studied family correspondence. A chapter that develops a theory of the functions of the family correspondence network is followed by one studying the affective relationships that the celibate sisters Mary and Anna Collet maintained through their letters with their unmarried uncle and spiritual mentor, Nicholas Ferrar. These chapters consider the identities as single people that all three developed through these relationships, within the maritally-focused framework of the Protestant family. The last chapter also concerns the lives of the unmarried, examining the relationships of single male adults and their roles in the family, focusing on the friendship of Nicholas Ferrar and his cousin Arthur Woodnoth.

The thesis closes by reflecting on the fact that returning the Ferrars to their seventeenth-century context reveals their multi-faceted nature, comprising ideals and identities sometimes incongruous with one another, and certainly unaccounted for in the traditional narratives. It thus demonstrates the importance of the overall project of reconceiving the Ferrars' history, which forms an original contribution to the study of the social, cultural and religious history of early seventeenth-century England.

CONTENTS

<i>Abstract</i>	i
<i>Contents</i>	iii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	iv
<i>Editorial note</i>	v
<i>Genealogical table</i>	vi
 <i>Introduction</i>	 1
 PART ONE: Revising the history of the Ferrars	
1 His brother's <i>Life</i> : the biography of Nicholas Ferrar and the Anglican historiography of Little Gidding	13
2 Life at Little Gidding: household order and routine	41
3 "The Way of Little Gidding": religious beliefs and practices	87
 PART TWO: Texts, identities and relationships	
4 The Little Academy: moral exempla, gender and performance in the education of young women	119
5 Ferrar Letters: letter-writing and the seventeenth-century family	143
6 Spiritualised relationships: Anna Collet, Nicholas Ferrar and Mary Collet	169
7 Unmarried men: Nicholas Ferrar and Arthur Woodnoth	187
 <i>Reflection</i> Ferrar identities: multiplicity, adaptation, reinvention	 219
 <i>Appendices</i>	 229
 <i>Bibliography</i>	 233

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have helped me to bring this thesis to completion.

First and foremost, I thank Prof. Patricia Crawford, who has provided unflagging enthusiasm and encouragement from the beginning of the project. She has shared her incomparable knowledge of the people of seventeenth-century England and their histories freely and I thank her for the privilege of working under her guidance. Thank you too to Prof. Philippa Maddern, who has offered energy, stimulating criticism, and original perspectives to which I would have been blind without her suggestion. Thank you both for persevering generously in the face of great personal adversities.

To Prof. Chris Wortham, thank you for the seed of the project, and for graciously watching over my first dissertation and keeping an eye on things since then.

Thank you to the people of History at UWA for their collegiality and for teaching me about their trade. And thanks to MEMS and English for letting me flout disciplinary borders from time to time. In particular, thanks to A/Profs Sue Broomhall, Yasmin Haskell, Andrew Lynch and Richard Read, Dr Stephanie Tarbin and Prof. Bob White for helpful discussions, advice and pleasant diversions. Thanks to members of the ARC Beyond the Family research team for including me in the fold over the years. Thanks to the ARC Network for Early European Research, especially the local stalwarts.

Beyond UWA, I am very obliged for their time and consideration to Prof. Christopher Haigh, Dr Vanessa Harding, Prof. Ludmilla Jordanova, Prof. Anne Laurence, Prof. Diarmaid McCulloch, Prof. John Morrill, Prof. Pam Sharpe, Dr Naomi Tadmor, Dr Peter Thompson, and Prof. Charles Zika. Thank you too to the many colleagues and friends across Australia and abroad who the thesis revealed.

I acknowledge with gratitude the Hackett Student Fund at UWA for the Hackett Postgraduate Scholarship that sustained my doctoral study, and for the provision of travel funding, the UWA School of Humanities, the UWA Graduate Research School, and the ARC Network for Early European Research. Thank you to the staff of the various libraries and archives consulted during the research, above all Dr Toby Burrows and the staff of the Scholars' Centre at the Reid Library.

To the friends and fellow postgraduates who have made the experience so much more than an academic exercise, thank you: Meg, Andrew, Sarah, Nic, Joanne, Marg, Luke, Fiona, Lesley, Karen, Tama, Emily, Oli, Ali, Lisa, Graeme, Leith, Bob, Marianne, Shane, Megan and the rest of the rabble. Special thanks and love to Harriet and Sarah, who were indispensable and very good-humoured during the final stages. I'm lucky to have you. Thanks also to my silent supporters, to Sue, and the ghosts in my clockwork: I know who you are.

To Mum, Dad, Tom and Harriet, I am, every day, grateful, happy, dumbfounded, and myself, because of you.

EDITORIAL NOTE

Other than passages from John Ferrar's *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*, which are quoted from the modern-spelling version published in Muir and White's *Materials for the Life of Nicholas Ferrar*¹, the original spelling of quotations from seventeenth-century documents is given, except for modern alphabetic substitutions of 'j' for 'i', 'v' for 'u', etc. Pagination for Muir and White refers to the independent 1996 volume (i-xxii + 144pp.), rather than to its sequence in the *Proceedings of the Leeds Historical and Literary Society* (Literary and Historical Section, Vol. XXIV, Part IV, pp.263-428). Contractions have been expanded silently. The spelling of proper names is standardised, according to the forms that occur most frequently in the seventeenth-century documents, in particular: Ferrar (Farrer, Farrar, Ferrer); Collet (Collett, Colet); and Woodnoth (Wodenoth, Wodenote). Variations present in the titles of manuscripts and in secondary sources are quoted as they appear. The year is taken to begin on 1 January. Biblical references are to the King James Version.

The microfilm images constituting Dr David R. Ransome's edition of the Ferrar Papers papers, published in 1992 by Microform Academic Publishers, are the authoritative sources for this thesis.² The CD-ROMs are not word-searchable, in contrast with much of the new digital edition of the Ferrar Papers that will be released by Adam Matthew Digital in late 2007.³ References to individual documents give the date, 'FP' for Ferrar Papers, the microfilm reel number and the individual microfilm number (as appears in columns 1 and 12 in Ransome's "Finding List"), followed in square brackets by the chronological number of the document images as they appear in the CD-ROM version. A suitable description of the document, or the names of the correspondents in the case of a letter, is given first. For example:

Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 15 Aug 1633, FP, r5, 907[402].

describes a letter from Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar dated 15 August 1633, Ferrar Papers, reel 5, microfilm number 907, image 402. Ransome's column 2 numbers, referring to numbers assigned each document in earlier cataloguing efforts (1930s, 1979 or 1989-90), are disregarded. For further information on Ransome's cataloguing system, see his Introduction to *The Ferrar Papers*, pp.vi-xii. Similarly, references to the Collett Letters from the volume in the Bodleian are given thus, with folio recto/verso:

Susanna Collet to Edward Collet, 6 Sep 1630, CL, fo12^r-12^v.

The genealogical table on the following pages comprises the best approximations of birth order and vital statistics of the Ferrars, compiled from available parish registers, apprenticeship records, J & J.A. Venn's *Alumni cantabrigienses*, and family trees in Ransome's "Introduction/Finding List".⁴

¹ Lynnette R. Muir & John A. White (eds), *Materials for the Life of Nicholas Ferrar: a reconstruction of John Ferrar's account of his brother's life based on all the surviving copies*, Leeds: Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, 1996.

² David R. Ransome (ed. and intro.), *The Ferrar Papers, 1590-1790 in Magdalene College, Cambridge*, East Ardsley, Wakefield, West Yorkshire: Microform Academic Publishers, 1992 [CD-ROM: 10 discs], including printed "Introduction/Finding List."

³ For a description of the new digital edition of the Ferrar Papers see the Adam Matthew Digital website, <http://www.amdigital.co.uk/collections/Virginia-Company-Archives/default.aspx/> (accessed April 3, 2007).

⁴ J. & J.A. Venn (comp.), *Alumni cantabrigienses: a biographical list of all known students, graduates and holders of office at the University of Cambridge, from the earliest times to 1900*, Part 1, Vols 1-4, Cambridge: University Press, 1922-54.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE

NICHOLAS FERRAR SEN. b.1544 or 1545, m.c.1578, d. Jun 1620

MARY WOODNOTH b.c.1554, m.c.1578, d. May 1634

Their children:

Mary bap.1579, d. infant

Susanna b.1581, bap.1582, m. **John Collet** c.1600, d. 9 Oct 1657, bur. Little Gidding

John bap.1583, d. infant

Joyce bap.1584, d. infant

Erasmus bap.1586, d.1609

John b.c.1588, m.(1) Anne Sheppard 16 Feb 1613, m.(2) Bathsheba Owen 14 Feb 1615, d. 28 Sep 1657, bur. Little Gidding

William d.1619

Nicholas bap. 28 Feb 1593, d. 4 Dec 1637, bur. Little Gidding

Richard b.c.1595

JOHN COLLET b.c.1578, m.c.1600, d.1650, bur. Little Gidding

SUSANNA FERRAR b.1581, bap.1582, m.c.1600, d. 9 Oct 1657, bur. Little Gidding

Their children (N.B. birth order is approximate):

Thomas b.c.1600, m. Martha Sherington 1628, d.1675

Mary b.c.1601, d.1680, bur. Little Gidding 9 Nov 1680

Susanna b.c.1602, m. (1) **Joshua Mapletoft** 1628, m. (2) **James Chidley** 1646, d. 31 Oct 1657, bur. Little Gidding

Anna b.c.1603, d.1639

Edward b.c.1604, m. **Joanna Thomas**

William b.c.1605

Nicholas b.c. 1606, m. Jane Smith 1636, d.1688

Hester b.c.1607, m. Francis Kestian 1635

Margaret b.c. 1608 m. John Ramsay 1636

[**Richard?** b.c. 1610]

Elizabeth b.c. 1612, m. Benjamin Woodnoth, d.1651

Joyce bap. 16 Mar 1615, m. Edward Wallis, d.1692

John bap. 10 Jun 1616-d.? (infant?)

Ferrar bap. 12 Apr 1618, d.1679

John bap. 5(?) Nov 1621, m. Ann Gouldsmyth in Virginia, d.c.1669-74

Judith bap. 2 Mar 1624, m. Solomon Mapletoft, d.1659/60

JOHN FERRAR b.c.1588, m. (1) Anne Sheppard 16 Feb 1613, m. (2) Bathsheba Owen 14 Feb 1615, d. 28 Sep 1657, bur. Little Gidding

BATHSHEBA OWEN b.?, m. John Ferrar 14 Feb 1615, d.1659, bur. Little Gidding

Their children:

Mary b.1615-19, d. infant

Nicholas b.1620, d. 19 May 1640

Virginia b. 24 Dec 1626, d. Jan 1688, bur. Little Gidding 17 Jan 1688

John b. Apr 1630, m. Ann Brooke 1657, d.23 Feb 1720

JOSHUA MAPLETOFT b.16 Jun 1594, m. (1) 1623, m. (2) Susanna Collet 1628, d.1635

SUSANNA COLLET b.c.1602, m. (1) Joshua Mapletoft 1628, m. (2) James Chidley 1646, d. 31 Oct 1657, bur. Little Gidding

Their children:

[**Ann** b.1623-8, Joshua Mapletoft's daughter with his first wife]

Mary b. Aug 1629, d.1665 (was living at Little Gidding by start of 1635)

John b. 15 Jun 1631, d. 10 Nov 1721

Samuel b.1632 d. < Sep 1634

Peter b.1634

INTRODUCTION

During the years 1652 to 1655, John Ferrar wrote a biography of his younger brother, Nicholas, who had died in 1637. Nicholas had been a pious man, and by describing the humility and composure that he had demonstrated in his final hours, John ensured that the record of his brother's behaviour was consistent with the contemporary religious ideal of making a good death.¹ With his anticipated celestial destination in sight, in John's account Nicholas nevertheless exhorted the family members who had gathered at his bedside to live devoutly, urging them to keep in "the good old way" to which they were accustomed.² The "good old way" referred to the prescripts and offices of the Church of England with which the Ferrar family conformed.

In the early 1650s the fortunes of those who, like the Ferrars, subscribed to the Church of England and supported traditional episcopacy differed dramatically from the comfortable circumstances of the 1630s. At the time of Nicholas's death, Archbishop Laud was executing his vision of ecclesiastical decorum and decoration throughout the parishes and cathedrals of England and Wales. Though his theological and liturgical views were not uncontested, Laud enjoyed the favour of King Charles I. As adherence to the national Church was obligatory, conformists were in a safe position. But when John Ferrar wrote the *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*, presbyterian government had been installed in the church and Parliament had banned the Book of Common Prayer. The Ferrars and others who were loyal to the Church of England fell foul of the godly administration and their familiar usages were no longer lawful.

John Ferrar's purpose in writing the *Life* in the 1650s was to depict the religious commitment of his brother and the Ferrar family during the 1620s and 30s. Seeking to defend and celebrate the religious tradition to which he and his brother belonged, John realised that Nicholas could be groomed as a heroic proponent of the cause that its now disenfranchised supporters sought to bolster. He portrayed Nicholas as a model of fidelity to conformist beliefs and practices, and so described at substantial length the distinctive routine of household worship and prayer that his brother had supervised at Little Gidding. John's picture of an ordered world was a nostalgic one, preserving the memory of better

¹ The good death is examined in the first three essays in Ralph Houlbrooke (ed.), *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement*, London & New York: Routledge, 1989, especially chapter 2: Lucinda McCray Beier, "The good death in seventeenth-century England". For the purported transcript of some of Nicholas's meditations on death, see John Ferrar, *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*, c.1655 in Lynette R. Muir & John A. White, *Materials for the Life of Nicholas Ferrar: A Reconstruction of John Ferrar's Account of his Brother's Life Based on All the Surviving Copies*, Leeds: Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, 1996, pp.116-17.

² Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.113.

times for himself and his family. But it was also part of the broader effort of more traditional conformists to resist the ascendancy of presbyterianism and foster their own corporate identity. Biographies of worthies, written in a mode that shared features with both Catholic hagiography and the adulatory lives and funeral sermons of godly Protestants, were one of the tools of the campaign.

The *Life of Nicholas Ferrar* has survived across the centuries to be embraced by those Anglicans who identify their heritage in the religious practice and custom modelled by the Caroline conformists and supplied by such texts. Despite the apologetic nature of the biography and the impossibility of proving whether Nicholas actually made his purported exhortation regarding “the good old way”, some Anglicans, conceiving of themselves as his spiritual heirs, have adopted the phrase to describe their devotional tradition (though generally not those who identify with the evangelicalism of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries or their Reform-minded predecessors in the Tudor and early Stuart Church).

In the seventeenth century, however, individuals whose beliefs rested at a variety of points on the spectrum of early modern Protestant Christianity called their interpretation of the faith “the good old way”, not only conformists. For example, several godly polemicists used the term in works published around the same time that John Ferrar was writing the *Life*.³ Some of them sought to revive the Reformed precedent of Tudor Puritans, such as Charles Broxolme whose *The good old way: or, Perkins improved* (1653) was a redaction of William Perkins’s *The Foundation of Christian Religion* (1591).⁴ Robert Harris and Henry Wilkinson, both appointed to the Westminster Assembly the following year, reissued John Bradford’s *The good old way* (1553) in 1652.⁵ These assorted claims to “the good old way” invoked the Scriptural record of the Lord’s injunction to Israel to follow the path that He had designated.⁶ They were competing claims to continuity with the heritage

³ The general currency of the phrase is reflected in the long titles of many other publications of the era and those printed after the Restoration. Amongst them are works by Baptists such as Matthew Caffyn (*Faith in God’s Promises ... especially intended for the use of such as are returned to the good old way of the Lord*, London: S. Dover, 1660) and Quakers such as Samuel Fisher, James Nayler (*What the possession of the living faith is ... and a candle lighted to give the sight of the good old way of God...*, London: printed for Thomas Simmons, 1659), Ambrose Rigge and later William Penn. Fisher’s *Christianismus redivivus, Christ’ndom both Unchrist’ned and New-Christ’ned, or that good old way of dipping and in-churching...* (London: Henry Hills, 1655), was a treatise on baptism from his early Baptist phase, republished by Richard Baxter in 1655 despite Fisher’s conversion.

⁴ London: printed for John Rothwel and Thomas Maxey, 1653.

⁵ *The good old way, or, An excellent and profitable treatise of repentance made by John Bradford in the yeare 1553*, London: Leonard Lichfield, 1652.

⁶ “Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance.” (1 Kings 8:36) “Then hear thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, when thou hast taught them the good way, wherein they should walk; and send rain upon thy land, which thou hast given unto thy people for an inheritance.” (2 Chronicles 6:27) “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.” (Jeremiah 6:16) “Thomas saith unto

of the English Church, in particular the spirit of the Reformation era, and they probably implied a return to the ancient righteousness of the primitive church too, which was one of the ideals to which the authors of Protestantism aspired.

Moreover, John Ferrar's account of his family's years at Little Gidding in the *Life* has long been accepted as an authoritative record of the Ferrars' history, with little regard such problematic aspects as its generic hallmarks of hagiography, and the fact that it was written from memory, around twenty years after the main period described, with the object of defending both the Ferrars and their faith.

Diarmaid MacCulloch has stressed the need for "destroying the myth of the English Reformation" in order to expose the genuine origins of "a church that has never subsequently dared define its identity decisively as Protestant or Catholic and that has decided in the end that this is a virtue rather than a handicap."⁷ Similarly, in order to develop understandings of the Ferrar family in their early seventeenth-century context, it is necessary to avoid looking back through the filters of subsequent historiography and confessional myth-making, in this case particularly avoiding too easy acceptance of the sanctified image projected through canonical Anglican histories. For in the years after the Little Gidding community dissipated, that image was incorporated into the history of the post-Reformation Church of England, where it remains entrenched. Nicholas Ferrar and his family were put to work alongside other laudable figures to serve contemporary ends, creating mythology that served the Church's present good, consolidating its identity, and exciting its members to devotion. The process built up momentum during the 1640s and 1650s when the Church was suppressed and flourished after the Restoration. Since then,

[t]he early seventeenth century has often been seen as a sort of Anglican golden age, abounding in writers of outstanding beauty and saintly characters, who somehow transcended the confessional squabbles of their day, harmonizing all that was best in patristic and medieval devotion with the clarity and simplicity of Reformed religion.⁸

John Ferrar's *Life* of his brother Nicholas, completed in the mid-1650s and including the only comprehensive account of the Ferrars' way of life at Little Gidding, was part of this phenomenon, supplying the Church with a hero and the Ferrar family with a mythologised heritage.

him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:5-6).

⁷ Diarmaid MacCulloch, "The Myth of the English Reformation", *Journal of British Studies* 30 (1991), p.19.

⁸ Geoffrey Rowell, Kenneth Stevenson & Rowan Williams (eds), *Love's Redeeming Work: The Anglican Quest for Holiness*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, p.9.

The broad purpose of this thesis is to revise the history of the Ferrars, studying the family and its members in terms of their own time and in comparison with the experiences of other early Stuart gentry families. Interrogating the account embodied in the *Life* is intrinsic to this project; John Ferrar's story is measured against evidence of the Ferrars' lives drawn from other family documents. The study diverges from previous histories' concentration on Nicholas and the supposedly exceptional (and thus exemplary) piety of the family. It endeavours to buck the trend of writing from within or to serve a factional Anglican tradition, avoiding the tendency to select positive details about the Little Gidding enterprise. Instead, it pursues questions more typical of scholars interested in cultural and social history and histories of the family and gender. The object of this approach is, foremost, to recover something of the subjective experiences of family life of members of the Little Gidding household other than Nicholas. It is also a response to the absence of a substantial examination of the Ferrars in the historiography of the early modern English gentry. The idealised image of his family that John Ferrar created in the *Life* is thus challenged for the first time.

The story of the Ferrars is about the recreation of family identity. Central matters of interest throughout the thesis are the Ferrars' ideals and practices, their relationships, and their identities, individual and corporate, and discussion proceeds with some simple, larger-scale questions in mind: who were the Ferrars; how did they live; and, in their own context, how usual was their way of life? With its close focus on the internal functioning of one family, and within it the inhabitants of a single, sizeable household, the micro-historical approach offers insights into how early modern people worked out their personal and familial identities, paying attention to the role of formative and sustaining intra-familial relationships. In view of these relationships and other dynamic phenomena, such as socialisation, which occurred in a domestic context, it makes sense to conceive of the family as the site of a set of processes, as well as a structured entity, and in so doing to counterbalance the impression of stability that contemporary discourse sought to create and which historical attention to its patrilineal and patriarchal aspects alone perpetuates.

The study also provides an impression of how this family responded to a crisis in its economic fortunes, and, against a background of political and religious tensions, drew on its gentry status and modified its urban, mercantile identity in a solution that combined practical measures and religious ideals. The documentary remains of the early years at Little Gidding thus form an excellent basis for investigation: the statements and actions captured in them illustrate the energy the Ferrars expended in conforming to their spiritual ideals, enforcing the pursuit of their programme intensively, and at times defensively, as they negotiated their new situation.

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part One addresses traditional representations of the Ferrars and seeks to revise them by making new accounts of the two subjects which, aside from Nicholas Ferrar himself, have thus far aroused most interest in Little Gidding: the pattern of daily life there, and the family's religious habits. Part Two investigates the Ferrars from new perspectives, giving precedence to matters of gender and intra-familial relationships. Composed largely from the analysis of family documents other than the *Life*, it explores the role of textual practices in the process of creating individual gendered identities within the family, in keeping with their social and religious ideals.

Part One begins with a chapter surveying the historiography of the Ferrars and Little Gidding. Chapter 1 addresses John Ferrar's *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*, then proceeds to demonstrate how the biography and the Anglican tradition to which it belongs have shaped interpretations of Little Gidding and the kind of information that has been sought about the Ferrars. Chapter 2 follows with an extensive examination of the nature of everyday life at Little Gidding. Beginning with an account of the background of the Ferrar family and the years before the move to Little Gidding, it attends to the practical organisation and functioning of the household in connection with the principles that informed its structure and routines. The discussion encompasses both material and spiritual concerns, and demonstrates the extent to which the Ferrars' values and habits were comparable with those of other contemporary families. Chapter 3 addresses religion at Little Gidding, which has received little explicit attention despite more than 350 years' worth of literature proclaiming the exceptional piety of the Ferrars. By studying evidence regarding the nature of the Ferrars' observances and the criticism they faced because of them, and assessing how Christian belief and practice at Little Gidding conformed with and differed from the usages of other early seventeenth-century English Protestants, the chapter arrives at a critical perspective on the model conformist family of the conventional accounts.

Many images of Little Gidding are the result of the Ferrars' practices of self-representation, not solely the product of observations made by outsiders or made later by historians; the most obvious example is John Ferrar's *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*, a conscious construction of the family's past, as demonstrated in chapter 1. The Ferrars' self-fashioning is given a central place in this study, in response to their manifest concern with making written account of themselves. Because many individuals participated in the process (though it was dominated by Nicholas and, through the biography, John), this approach helps to recover something of the experiences of the many women and young people in the household who are otherwise underrepresented in the archive, and to develop an understanding of relational dynamics within the family. Individual identities and in particular unified images of the family were constructed textually; literate practices were a

prime means by which the Ferrars worked out, communicated to one another, and reinforced personal and corporate identities, at the same time as performing practical functions: communicative (letters), educational (moral stories and dialogues), and devotional (the majority of writings). Part Two of the thesis concentrates on these phenomena. Their prominence is a sign and a symptom of the Ferrars' social status as educated Protestants who embraced the written (W)ord to work out their salvation and their situation in the world. Judiciously used, reading and writing were invaluable means of dispelling ignorance and encouraging personal accountability according to the measure of Christian morality.

In chapter 4, the textual remains of the Little Academy, a dialogue circle in which the Collet sisters were the main participants, are considered. The young women met periodically to discuss morally edifying historical tales, having prepared and memorised the stories which they would contribute beforehand. The unique institution offered its female members a textually-mediated experience of the world as an antidote to worldliness, and was a forum in which they could experiment with knowledge and speech that was nonetheless circumscribed, reinforcing conventional gender roles and religious values.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 draw upon evidence from the Ferrars' correspondence. Many of their letters survive, having been kept intentionally in the family archive that Nicholas Ferrar controlled during his years at Little Gidding. The knowledge that the letters might be preserved must have affected their composition; so too the fact that it was usual for missives to be read by, or to, persons other than the addressee.⁹ Amongst the more idiosyncratic of the Ferrars' letter-writing practices is the composition of corporate letters, for example those countersigned by three sisters, produced as a means of enacting familial duty for the satisfaction of senior or supervisory relatives, and embodying unity of purpose – a token of the concord of hearts and minds. Also noteworthy is the exchange of letters within the household in place of face-to-face conversation, perhaps associated with a sense of the authority of the written word. Though letters were not necessarily private, the candour and intimacy of disclosure in the process of writing could heighten the tenor of textually-mediated relationships, such as that of Anna Collet and Nicholas Ferrar, the lack of immediate interlocutory contact furnishing a space conducive to imagining, and indeed filled with imagined consequence. The complexity of a medium in which the tension between shared and confidential matters was ever present demands special care of the historian in the exposition.

A theory of the functions of the family correspondence network is developed in chapter 5. Understanding the purposes of constant letter-writing between family members

⁹ Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.

is important given that the letters are an indispensable source of information about the Ferrars. Because the same is true of many other families for which literacy was attendant on relatively elevated social status, the ideas are broadly applicable. Letters were means of reiterating the ordering principles through which family was defined, in particular regarding gender, age and marital status, the correspondents describing and confirming the roles and beliefs through which the family was constituted at the same time as they monitored its state.

Chapter 6 consists of a close study of the affective relationships that the celibate sisters Mary and Anna Collet maintained with their uncle and spiritual mentor, Nicholas Ferrar, as expressed in the letters they exchanged whilst living at Little Gidding. Nicholas was also unmarried, and the discussion considers the identities that all three developed as single people through these relationships with their religious cast, within the conventional, maritally-focused framework of the Protestant family. Because celibacy is one of the least-studied aspects of sexuality in early modern Protestant society there is added impetus for the investigation undertaken here and in chapter 3. The focus remains on the lives of the unmarried in chapter 7, this time concentrating on the relationships of single men, in particular the friendship of Nicholas Ferrar and his goldsmith cousin Arthur Woodnoth. Again using evidence from correspondence, the centrality of the practice of advice-giving to the cousins' mutual construction of their masculinity is demonstrated, and the similar consequence of their supervision of junior male relatives' vocational training is shown.

According to John Ferrar, the pursuit of religion was the aspect of life that held priority at Little Gidding. The Ferrars' days were organised in a manner that Nicholas believed would best help them to practise their Christian faith. But during the relatively short time they spent experimenting with communal living there they did not reconcile smoothly the different bases of their social identity: the Ferrars' claim to gentility of blood existed in tension with the immediate commercial origins of their wealth, and both of these factors were at odds with the new quasi-clerical status that they countenanced. Nor could they completely harmonise the ideal of an intensive, liturgical community with the everyday demands of a large, secular family. Their worldly and supernatural concerns were often contradictory and their attempts to breach the divide between them, or elevate the spiritual, often via rhetoric, paradoxical. Looking back across the years from the time of Nicholas's death to the period before the family was established at Little Gidding, the thesis closes with a Reflection on the ultimate complexity of the Ferrars' identity, which was a product of their responses to the challenging circumstances they were forced to negotiate. Returned to their seventeenth-century context, it emerges that, despite the peculiarities, many aspects of the Ferrars' experience and identity are typical of other gentry families in early modern

England, so that noting these points of variance and conformity adds to historical understandings of this broader social group.

The primary materials upon which this study is based include selections from most of the different sorts of documents the Ferrars produced during their first twelve years at Little Gidding, together with some written before they left London and others written after Nicholas Ferrar's death in 1637. Surviving seventeenth-century textual evidence about the Ferrars written by non-relatives is also used.

The importance of John Ferrar's biography of his brother has been pointed out already. The *Life* includes the only account of the Ferrars' routine at Little Gidding, and offers insights into the values and interests of author and subject alike.¹⁰ Unrivalled in detail and extent as it is, the biography is constrained by peculiarities of genre; yet to date historians have adopted its testimony as authoritative without critical reflection. No commentator has suggested that by writing the *Life* John Ferrar might have been trying to uphold his family's (and thus his own) reputation at the same time as holding up his brother's example for emulation. Neither has it been noted that John worked with posterity in mind: Nicholas's memory could serve the interests of Ferrars to come. No worldly intentions have been attributed to John, even though it was typical of men who belonged to families of some distinction to be preoccupied with their status, and part of his purpose in securing the good reputation of the Ferrars was to promote his children's future interests.

The example illustrates the overall lack of consideration of contextual issues in Ferrar historiography. To refigure the account it is necessary to move away from the traditional focus on the decontextualised individual that the use of the *Life* has supported, and to take a wider-angled view that encompasses and emphasises Nicholas's family and friends. In the end, attending to the experiences of other family members when scrutinising the primary sources delivers findings that suggest alternative understandings of Nicholas's character and his religious aims at Little Gidding.

Sources other than the biography are plentiful and relatively neglected. Evidence from the extensive Ferrar family archive is used throughout the thesis. The collection, covering the period c.1590-c.1790, is housed at Magdalene College, Cambridge. It consists predominantly of correspondence, especially for the period being examined, but it contains a range of other documents, many of them consistent with the collection's origin as a

¹⁰ The existing MSS of the *Life*, listed as in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.xiii, are: "Almack", MS Add. 4484, Cambridge University Library; "Baker", Baker MSS, vol.35, MS Mm.i.46, Cambridge University Library; "Jones", MS Jones B.87, Dr Williams's Library, London; "Magdalene", Ferrar MSS, Box 14, Item 28, Magdalene College, Cambridge; "Rawlinson", MS Rawlinson D.2, Bodleian Library, Oxford. In addition they list "Lambeth", MS 251, Lambeth Palace Library, London – John Ferrar's account of the making of the royal concordances.

business archive, such as inventories, invoices and accounts. From 1620 when his father died until his own death in 1637, Nicholas Ferrar managed the archive. It thus contains many drafts or copies of his letters, as well as a large amount of correspondence he exchanged with Arthur Woodnoth. The documents surviving from the years after 1637 are markedly fewer, an important reason for the thesis's focus on the period 1625-37. Discrete items within the papers worthy of note include several dialogue transcripts from the Little Academy at Little Gidding, an entire copy of the corporate records of the London Virginia Company (Nicholas had commissioned the copy on the eve of the confiscation of the originals by crown officials for auditing in 1624), and Nicholas Ferrar's parliamentary diaries from 1624.¹¹

Materials used in addition to the Magdalene papers include: a seventeenth-century part-transcription of the *Life* preserved in the Cambridge University Library, accompanied by assorted prayers written by Nicholas;¹² a bundle of Susanna Collet's letters, copied by an eighteenth-century descendant into a small volume that survives in the Bodleian, read with the possibility that the transcription process entailed editing and selection of detail in mind; family wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury; a copy of Nicholas Ferrar's *Sir Thomas Smith's Misgovernment of the Virginia Company* from the Devonshire Papers at Chatsworth; and the deeds for the manor of Little Gidding and documents relating to the Ferrars' purchase of the estate from the Annesley collection at the Oxfordshire Record Office.¹³

Aside from these works, several of the Biblical concordances that the Ferrars made survive. Unique elements of the material history of Little Gidding, these contain only Scriptural texts and stock Biblical illustrations and thus do not serve as a resource in this study.¹⁴ Copies of Nicholas's two published translation projects are extant. *Hygiasticon*, a treatise on temperance by the Flemish Jesuit Leonardus Lessius, based on the work of Luigi Cornaro, went to press in 1634, and Juan de Valdés's *Divine Considerations*, the first

¹¹ Some of the dialogues, or "Story Books", are housed in the British Library. MSS Add. 34657-9, British Library, London. Dialogues are printed in Emily Cruwys Sharland (ed. & intro.), *The Story Books of Little Gidding*, London: Seeley & Co., 1899; B. Blackstone (ed.), *The Ferrar Papers: containing a life of Nicholas Ferrar*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938; and A.M. Williams (ed. & intro.), *Conversations at Little Gidding. 'On the Retirement of Charles V.' 'On the Austere Life.' Dialogues by Members of the Ferrar Family*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970. The parliamentary diaries are printed as: D.R. Ransome (ed.), "The parliamentary papers of Nicholas Ferrar" in *Seventeenth-century Political and Financial Papers, Camden Miscellany XXXIII*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Royal Historical Society, 1996, pp.2-104.

¹² MS Add. 4484, Cambridge University Library ("Almack"). For the provenance and details of the manuscript, see Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.14-15.

¹³ The Manor of Little Gidding, 10 June 1592 - [c.1766], E6/12/13D/1-25, Annesley MSS, Oxfordshire Record Office, Oxford.

¹⁴ For a list of the concordances and their locations see Muir & White, *Materials*, p.xiv.

published English rendering, was printed in 1638, shortly after his death.¹⁵ A third translation, of Ludovico Carbone's *Introductio ad Catechismum, sive Doctrinam Christianam* (Venice: at the sign of the lion, 1596), entitled "Of the instruction of children in the Christian doctrine", was lost after it was refused a license at Cambridge in 1636.¹⁶ Copies of John Ferrar's anonymously-published treatise of 1648, *A perfect description of Virginia*, also survive.¹⁷

A derogatory pamphlet entitled *The Arminian Nunnery*, published in 1641, is the only printed document from the seventeenth century wholly concerning the Ferrars. The pamphlet contains a distorted version of the observations of Edward Lenton, a young lawyer who visited Little Gidding in 1634. Lenton reported what he had seen in a letter to Sir Thomas Hetley, which somehow made its way into hands of the pamphlet author/s. The letter survives in the British Library and is a rare outsiders' perspective on the household.¹⁸ Apart from this, comparative reference is made to a variety of contemporary materials, printed in the early modern period or subsequently, which are listed in the bibliography at the end of the thesis.

* * * * *

Before commencing the analytical process of the thesis, it remains to introduce the Ferrars and to recount the basic sequence of events during the focal period of the study, starting with the move to Little Gidding in 1625 and concluding with Nicholas's death in December 1637. The narrative here does not rely on the account that John made later, but discussion of the *Life* begins in earnest immediately afterwards in chapter 1.

In the summer of 1625 the Ferrars were facing plague and financial strain at home in the heart of the London mercantile community. They abandoned their house on St

¹⁵ Leonardus Lessius, *Hygiasticon: or, the right course of preserving Life and Health unto extream old Age...*, trans. Nicholas Ferrar, Cambridge: Roger Daniel, 1634 [Antwerp, 1613]. Includes part of Luigi Cornaro's *Discorsi sulla Vita Sobria* [Padua, 1558-65], from which Lessius's work is derived, translated by George Herbert. A second edition was printed the same year. Juan de Valdés, *The hundred and ten considerations of Signior John Valdeso...*, trans. Nicholas Ferrar with notes by George Herbert, Oxford: Leonard Lichfield, 1638. Valdés (c.1500-41) the reformer fled Spain for Naples in 1531 following condemnation by the Spanish Inquisition, which also suppressed his writings. The *Considerations* appeared in other European languages from the mid-sixteenth century. The Ferrar-Herbert edition was the first English translation.

¹⁶ Muir & White, *Materials*, p.xv, and mentioned in Ferrar, *Life*, p.94.

¹⁷ [John Ferrar], *A perfect description of Virginia: being, a full and true relation of the present state of the plantation, their health, peace, and plenty...*, London: prind [sic] for Richard Wodenoth, 1649 (i.e. 1648).

¹⁸ Edward Lenton, letter to Sir Thomas Hetley, MS Harley 4845, British Library, London; copy, c.1633-May 1634, FP, r5, 939[499-504]. The letter is printed together with Lenton's 1641 letter disavowing involvement in the production of the pamphlet, in response to John Ferrar's complaint about the fact that his account had been used to defame the family, in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.128-36, and in Mayor, *Two Lives*, pp.xxiii-xxxvi.

Sythe's Lane, and travelled to the small manor of Little Gidding, situated in the quiet countryside of north-western Huntingdonshire, where they settled down to await the end of the contagion. Mary Ferrar (c.1554-1634), the widowed matriarch of the family, had acquired the property the previous year, in a bid to offset the debt accrued by her eldest surviving son, John (1588-1657), when his business partner, Thomas Sheppard, was bankrupted. The purchase was arranged by her middle son, Nicholas (1593-1637).

John Ferrar and Thomas Sheppard were cloth merchants trading between London and Hamburg. They belonged to the Skinners' Company, just as John's father, Nicholas Ferrar sen. (1554/5-1620), had before him. Sheppard's insolvency was the result of a legal dispute and the loss of investments in the Virginia Company when it was dissolved by the Crown in May 1624. The Ferrars had been engaged in Virginia Company business since Nicholas Ferrar sen. had joined the youthful enterprise in 1609, and they too had watched their investments collapse with the Company. The mortgaged estate of Little Gidding was amongst Sheppard's remaining assets. To resolve John's obligation to Sheppard, John's younger brother Nicholas arranged to buy it for £6000, in their mother Mary Ferrar's name, and using her dowry.¹⁹

Nicholas, unmarried and 32 years old, led the relocation of his mother from the capital to the derelict manor house at Little Gidding, together with John Ferrar, his wife Bathsheba (née Owen, ?-1659), and their five-year-old son, Nicholas jun. At old Mrs Ferrar's request, John and Nicholas's elder sister, Susanna (1581-1657), soon left her home in the village of Bourn, near Cambridge, to join them. She brought her husband, John Collet (1572-1650), and probably 11 of their 14 surviving children to live under the same roof. The Collet children ranged in age from 24 years (Mary) to just over a year old (Judith); eight of them were daughters.²⁰

Motivated in part by the desire to express gratitude for the family's deliverance from the epidemic and complete financial ruin, Nicholas Ferrar established them in their seclusion in what he conceived to be a lifestyle of Christian witness superior to their usual practice in town. The householders participated in a regimen of devotions, worship, gainful study and charitable activities, scheduled throughout the day in a manner reminiscent of monastic hours but in conformity with the offices and principles of the Church of England.

Nicholas and his mother, together with some other family members, returned to London in the spring of 1626, apparently to discharge their remaining affairs there. Afterwards they all seem to have regarded the living arrangements at Little Gidding as

¹⁹ D. R. Ransome, "John Ferrar of Little Gidding", *Records of Huntingdonshire*, 3:8 (2000), p.21.

²⁰ See genealogical table, pp.vi-vii.

permanent.²¹ Of the “forty persons” in the household, “above twenty did duly ask the old gentlewoman’s blessing morning and evening”; that is, more than twenty were close relatives, Ferrars and Collets, as distinct from non-kin householders such as schoolmasters and servants.²² At about the same time (certainly in 1626), John and Susanna Collet’s third surviving son, also Nicholas, joined his two elder brothers who were already living in London. Nicholas Collet was indentured as an apprentice goldsmith to his mother’s cousin, Arthur Woodnoth (c.1590-c.1650), and henceforth lodged at Woodnoth’s premises at the sign of the bunch of grapes in Foster Lane.²³ Edward Collet was also an apprentice, and Thomas, the Collet heir, was a Middle Templar, called to the bar on 24 November that year.²⁴

Nicholas Ferrar was the animating spirit and head of the household at Little Gidding from its inception until he died, aged 44, in 1637. Nicholas was intelligent, well-educated and a skilled negotiator, who possessed pre-eminent authority within his family for those reasons and above all on the basis of his especial godliness. Though John had been the senior male since the death of their father, Nicholas sen., in 1620, it was Nicholas who assumed the role of patriarch despite being the younger brother and a lifelong bachelor. Nicholas’s superiority was established and endorsed by his father by the time Nicholas sen. made his will in March 1620, in which he created Nicholas sole executor instead of his heir John. John and his mother Mary were appointed joint overseers.²⁵

The Ferrars pursued their life of corporate devotion under the supervision of its instigator for twelve years, the interval that this thesis explores in detail. It was during this time that the Ferrars earned a reputation for their religiosity.

²¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.66.

²² Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.65.

²³ My thanks to the Librarian of the Worshipful Co. of Goldsmiths, Foster Lane, who kindly confirmed Nicholas Collet’s enrolment and freedom details. Nicholas was made a freeman on 28 March 1634 and went on to serve as a Warden in 1674 and 1675.

²⁴ H.A.C. Sturgess (comp.), *Register of Admissions to the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, from the fifteenth century to the year 1944*, vol.1, London: Butterworth & Co., 1949. Thomas Collet entered the Middle Temple on 4 June 1619, the same year as Bulstrode Whitelocke, and the two were called to the bar on the same day, 24 November 1626. Thomas Collet was made a bencher on 5 November 1652 (p.109). His heir, John Collet, in turn entered the Middle Temple, on 12 January 1652, then called to the bar on 11 Feb 1659, (p.151), followed by his heir, William, admitted 24 April 1686 (p.216). Thomas Collet’s deceased maternal uncles, Erasmus and William Ferrar, had preceded him at the Middle Temple some years earlier. Erasmus Ferrar, at the time heir of Nicholas Ferrar the elder, was admitted on 20 Mar 1604 (p.81), followed by Ferrar’s third son, William, on 10 May 1610. William was called to the bar on 19 June 1618 (p.95).

²⁵ Will of Nicholas Ferrar, Skinner of London, dat. 23 Mar 1620, prob. 4 Apr 1620, Soame Quire nos 1-64, PROB 11/135, PCC, TNA, reprinted in J.E.B. Mayor (ed.), *Nicholas Ferrar: two lives, by his brother John and by Doctor Jebb*, Cambridge: Macmillan & Cambridge University Press, 1855, pp.340-44.

1 **His brother's *Life*: the biography of Nicholas Ferrar and the Anglican historiography of Little Gidding**

Life of Nicholas Ferrar

For John Ferrar, the initial move to Little Gidding had meant consigning his former activities as a London merchant and a senior member of the Virginia Company to the past. The core of his responsibility in the new rural household had been to promote the spiritual and material welfare of his family in accordance with his younger brother Nicholas's design for their communal way of life. John had participated in the family's intensive devotional routine but as an adult man and father, his hours had not been bound to the same extent as were those of his children and nieces. He had worked at provisioning the household and getting revenue via letting the manor's lands for farming, and maintained relationships with relatives and former colleagues, notably his Virginia Company associate Sir Edwin Sandys (1561–1629), by correspondence. When the Ferrars undertook to renovate the nearby church of Leighton Ecclesia (Leighton Bromswold) for its prebendary George Herbert (1593–1633) in the summer of 1632, it was John who had coordinated the works and supervised the process, according to their plans “by three times a week attending the workmen and providing all materials.”¹

Bereft of the guiding influence of his brother from 1638 and amidst the shifting patterns of activity in the household, John Ferrar assumed the headship and took full charge of administering the estate leases, as well as the business of securing his children's prospects. Apart from these significant tasks, three projects stand out amongst the concerns that ordered and occupied his days: making Bible concordances, the matter of the English colony in Virginia, and writing a biography of his brother Nicholas. The first two of these provide context for the production of the latter, the *Life*, which is the subject of the first part of this chapter.

John's concordance-making efforts were interrupted on 19 May 1640 when Nicholas jun., his elder son and heir, who had been responsible for much of the concordance work, died aged only 20 years. Just weeks previously father and son had presented Charles I with the Kings and Chronicles harmony, Nicholas's work so

¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.94. In late July 1632 John Ferrar reported to Nicholas: “We have 18 Masons and Labrores at worke at Layton Church and we shall have this weeke 10 Carpenters[.] God prosper the worke and send mony in Amen”. John Ferrar to Nicholas Ferrar, 30 Jul 1632, FP, r5, 862[33], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.274–6, quote: p.276.

impressing the King, with whom the youth apparently shared the affliction of stammering, that Charles determined to support him at university and take him into his service.² Nicholas jun. was an accomplished linguist and a promising scholar. At the court visit he had made a gift to the Prince of Wales of a gospel concordance which he had made in four parallel languages (English, French, Italian and Latin), and he proposed to the monarch two polyglot New Testaments, in eight and 24 languages respectively.³

Nicholas jun. had been a favourite of his namesake uncle, with whom he also shared scholarly and pious interests and frail health. Possibly it was envisioned that he would one day inherit his uncle's position in family and household. Such neat typology was perhaps irresistible to his bereaved father John, whose own affection for his son Nicholas jun. certainly registers in the account of his brother's life that he composed some 15 years after his son's death. John wrote of how his brother had studied with Nicholas jun., "his dearly beloved nephew, in whom he took great joy for the blossoms of goodness and ingenuity that he discerned to sprout out daily in him",⁴ and further how, as he lay dying, he had called for

his nephew Nicholas Ferrar ... and this youth he loved dearly and looked upon him as him to whom Gidding, by God's blessing, would in the end descend and, desirous he might continue in that virtuous and pious course, he had by his love and care been trained up in from his cradle.⁵

With this statement John implied for the record his will to cede his own heir to be successor to his childless brother, albeit after it had become impossible for this to eventuate. It may be the case that he had internalised his displacement in the Ferrar succession, both as his father's heir and as the father to the (now defunct) heir. Likewise, it is probable that his deference to Nicholas was quite genuine. Neither of these points is incompatible with the possibility that John felt it was prudent to acknowledge his brother's entitlement to Little Gidding and its legacy over his own. Even though the manor itself was his, having first been passed by his mother to Nicholas, it was Nicholas's spiritual legacy that would prove to be of utmost value to posterity. John likely felt it was a prouder inheritance than that which he himself could leave to his surviving children and relatives, and bore this in mind when he wrote the biography that he thought would bring Nicholas's reputation before the public eye. John's representation of the relationship between his

² D.R. Ransome, "John Ferrar", p.22. The younger Nicholas had not gone up to university. He had a weak constitution and thus was educated at Little Gidding by his uncle Nicholas.

³ Joyce Ransome, "Monotessaron: The Harmonies of Little Gidding", *Seventeenth Century* 20:1 (Apr 2005), pp.37-8. A dated study of Nicholas Ferrar the younger, based on the accounts in Mayor, *Two Lives*, is C. Leslie Craig, *Nicholas Ferrar, Junior: A Linguist of Little Gidding*, London: Epworth Press, 1950.

⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.93.

⁵ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.114.

brother Nicholas, his son Nicholas jun., and himself, illustrates the interplay of worldly and spiritual priorities that characterised the lives of the Ferrars of Little Gidding.

Yet John did carry on with his son's multilingual work. On at least two occasions he wrote seeking the assistance of Dr Isaac Basire (*bap.*1608-1676), prebend of Durham. Basire was interested in oriental languages in connection with his mission to promote the Church of England in eastern and Orthodox territories, for which purpose he travelled extensively in the Near East during the early 1650s.⁶ John quite reasonably presumed he might find subscribers for polyglot concordances amongst Basire's acquaintance, and wrote to him in that regard around 1643. Ten years later he wrote again, asking Basire if he could obtain for him various oriental translations of the New Testament to be used in the construction of a prospective concordance in fifty languages.⁷ The final extent of John's polyglot harmony production is not clear.

Documents in the family archive indicate that John Ferrar invested a great deal of energy in a reinvigorated and sustained concern with the fate of the colony in Virginia after Nicholas's death. In all likelihood he had harboured an interest in the fortunes of English efforts there throughout the years at Little Gidding, but during the 1640s and 1650s he gave lease to his enthusiasm and undertook extensive correspondence with Virginians and other Englishmen who shared his interest in the colony. In addition, he composed a series of pamphlets outlining his views on the past and the future of the plantation, some published anonymously and others bearing his name.⁸ By that time, the difficulties which had beset the settlement and its governors in America and in England from 1619 and throughout the first half of the 1620s, when John and Nicholas Ferrar had been deeply embroiled in Virginia Company affairs, had abated somewhat, refreshing expectations of its prosperity.

⁶ Colin Brennen, "Basire, Isaac, de Preaumont (*bap.* 1608, *d.* 1676)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, eds H.C.G. Matthew & Brian Harrison, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004 (hereafter ODNB), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1618> (accessed March 18, 2007). Basire was sequestered in 1644 and had been in exile on the Continent since 1647. It was his practice to obtain and distribute translations of the catechism from the Book of Common Prayer in the local languages of the places he visited. For contemporary English multilingual Biblical scholarship see Peter N. Miller, "The 'Antiquarianization' of Biblical Scholarship and the London Polyglot Bible (1653-57)", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 62:3 (2001), pp.463-82. In his oriental interests, Basire was in step with Laud's thinking. The Archbishop saw important resources for the rejuvenation of the English Church in the Greek, Ottoman and Arab worlds, and sponsored the study of Arabic and Eastern languages in this connection. See Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The Church of England and the Greek Church in the Time of Charles I" in his *From Counter-Reformation to Glorious Revolution*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1992, pp.83-111, and "Laudianism and Political Power" in his *Catholic, Anglican, and Puritans: Seventeenth-Century Essays*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1987, p.79; G.J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.

⁷ Letter of John Ferrar to Dr Isaac Basire, 1653, Dean and Chapter Library, Durham, MS Hunter, fo 132, cited in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.22. Basire's receipt of the letter was delayed until February 1662, by which time John had been dead five years.

⁸ Despite never visiting North America, one of John's (anonymous) publications was entitled *A perfect description of Virginia*.... For further discussion of his continuing interest in Virginia, see D.R. Ransome, "John Ferrar", pp.23-4.

John and Bathsheba's only daughter, born on Christmas Eve 1626, had been christened Virginia (1626-1688) by her grandmother and her uncle, Mary and Nicholas Ferrar, to promote her father's continued dedication to the colony. As she grew up, John fostered the association between girl and plantation in his relationship with her, just as his mother and brother had intended: "they named his daughter Virginia, so that, either speaking to her, or looking upon her, or hearing other call her by her name, he might, I say, pray and think upon both at once."⁹ It is possible that the family were playing on the likeness between the purity and potential embodied in the young girl and that of the New World.¹⁰

John introduced Virginia to rearing silkworms when she was a child and encouraged her in the experiments she conducted throughout her youth to determine which silkworms would be most resilient and productive in the Virginian environment. He believed that sericulture promised to be a good industry to establish in the plantation, to diversify its tobacco-based economy and to garner real profits. John steered his daughter into connections with relatives and friends who had travelled to North America too, with whom she engaged in regular correspondence.

Working on the concordances and cultivating the identity (and respective identities) of his two Virginias were pious projects, as was the third great effort of John's later years and the one most significant in relation to the history of the Ferrars: Nicholas's biography. Historians estimate that John composed his *Life of Nicholas Ferrar* between 1653 and 1655. What accounts for his motivation to do so, given the volume of other preoccupations and particularly in view of the circumstances of the 1650s? Amongst the suggested answers are themes that recur in the ensuing study of the Ferrar family.

Commitment to the Church was central to John's motivation for writing Nicholas's *Life*. In the 1650s, stricken conformists identified the need to salvage the achievements of the post-Reformation English Church to assist in demonstrating the existence of their legitimate, distinct tradition and by doing so to validate their lives and beliefs. Biography was one of the literary devices that they marshalled in self-defence, recording the lives of a

⁹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.115. John added: "This is but by the by, yet let me say both grandmother and uncle loved her and liked her much the better for her name. And what further insight they had in giving that name let others conjecture." His comments reflect the value placed on the approbation of Nicholas and the matriarch, and seem indicative of his will to mythologise his daughter's part in the broader history of the family. In the *Life* John states he had "one only daughter the year after he came to Gidding... she, being born on Christmas Eve" (p.115), from which Muir and White place Virginia's birth in 1626 (p.127), whereas D.R. Ransome says Virginia was probably born in 1627 ("John Ferrar", p.21). She was buried at Little Gidding on 17 January 1688 (Little Gidding parish register, Cambridgeshire Record Office, Huntingdon).

¹⁰ The analogy carries in the case of the first English child born in the New World: Virginia, daughter of Ananias and Elinor Dare, was born 18 August 1587 on Roanoke Island, in the territory which Raleigh had named Virginia in honour of Queen Elizabeth I (now North Carolina).

variety of leading divines and other pious figures. Nicholas Ferrar counts among the number. As Judith Maltby states,

[w]hat we observe in the 1640s and 1650s is the hardening of certain religious traditions *within* the larger pre-civil war Church of England and their emergence as *the* Church of England. The formation of this religious identity was greatly aided by the retrospective spin doctors of the Restoration Church of England; the biographer Izaak Walton being both the most notable and engaging of them. Walton, not Richard Hooker, in many ways deserves the title of the inventor of Anglicanism.¹¹

The *Life* is commemorative and laudatory in character, not overly wistful in its reminiscence, and it was intended to find a readership beyond the kin and close friends of its subject. An unnamed “Historian” whose “often and frequent good company” at Little Gidding John noted, seems to have suggested that John should gather materials for the biography. The “Historian” had approached John for information about Nicholas “upon the earnest request of all [his] good friends”, apparently planning to write the biography himself to bring Nicholas’s story “to the world’s eye.” To this end he furnished John with an eight-part linear structure for ordering the biographical data, based on the successive phases of Nicholas’s life, from his parentage and birth to his last days and death.¹² John wrote the *Life* according to these guidelines.

The editors of an eighteenth-century rendering of the *Life* supposed the Revd Barnabas Oley (*bap.* 1602-1686) to be the “Historian”, and their identification is plausible.¹³ Oley was Nicholas’s friend and had been a fellow student at Clare Hall at Cambridge, and both had been entrusted with different manuscripts by George Herbert on the poet’s death (Oley was given *The Country Parson* and Ferrar *The Temple*). Oley went on to publish *Herbert’s Remains* in 1652, followed some years later by *The Country Parson [A Priest to the Temple]* in 1671, and edited the theological works of the Laudian dean of Peterborough, Thomas Jackson (*bap.* 1578-1640), printed in subsequent volumes from 1653 to 1657.¹⁴ Jackson,

¹¹ Original emphases. Judith Maltby, “‘The Good Old Way’: Prayer Book Protestantism in the 1640s and 1650s” in *Studies in Church History 38: The Church and the Book*, ed. R.N. Swanson, Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 2004, pp.255-56.

¹² The “Historian’s” directions for John’s biography of Nicholas survive, together with the text of a letter John wrote to the “Historian”, dated 20 July 1655. From the letter it seems that John was sending what he had written to the “Historian”, from which the latter would work to produce a polished account. The instructions and John’s letter are reproduced from MS Rawlinson D.2, Bodleian Library, Oxford, in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.37-40. The eight-part structure conforms to the conventional notion of men’s lives being divided into seven “ages”, each lasting approximately seven years; the “Historian” specified an eighth part dedicated to the day of Nicholas’s death.

¹³ Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.3-5. For Oley’s life, see Elizabeth R. Clarke, “Oley, Barnabas (*bap.* 1602-1686)” in *ODNB*, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20704> (accessed Mar 1, 2007), and Clarke, “The Character of a Non-Laudian Country Parson”, *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 54:216 (2003), pp.479-96.

¹⁴ *Herbert’s remains, or, sundry pieces of that sweet singer of the temple, Mr George Herbert ...*, comp. B. Oley, London: printed for Timothy Garthwait, 1652; *A collection of the works of that holy man and profound divine, Thomas*

Laud's "special protégé", was president for nine years of Oxford's Corpus Christi College.¹⁵ He was a great scholar and linguist, and corrected the text of Nicholas Ferrar's translation from Italian of Juan de Valdés's *Divine Considerations*, published posthumously in 1638.¹⁶ Oley praised Ferrar, Herbert and Jackson together in his preface to *The Country Parson*, and John Ferrar recalled Jackson as a model of patience in the face of "Lye-Bell".¹⁷ Another Clare colleague, Robert Byng, contributed a letter supplying information about Nicholas's time at Cambridge, dated 13 ("Idibus") September 1654, which John included in the *Life*.¹⁸ Byng roundly endorsed the "Historian's" plan to create a "goodly structure ... for the preservation of his precious memory here on earth, who now shines most gloriously *inter stellas primae magnitudinis* among the ever blessed saints in the highest heavens." His language indicates how willingly some of Nicholas's acquaintances attested to his extraordinary holiness and the hyperbolic mode they used to express their acclaim, an indication of their complicity with the apologetic project.

Byng's testimony suggests the extent to which the creation of the saintly Nicholas was informed by long-established generic characteristics of hagiography. Walton and other biographers working at the same time as Oley certainly employed elements of the traditional hagiological narrative: a godly disposition from childhood, a visionary experience, "the attainment of the beatific vision [and] woven into these ... a version of the typical miracle stories."¹⁹ Nicholas's *Life* has all of these features, from the child's fit of anguish at his sinfulness, leaving his bed one frosty night for the garden where he flung himself weeping onto the grass and prayed, Luther-like, for assurance that there was a God,

Jackson..., comp. B. Oley, London: R. Norton for Timothy Garthwait, 1653; *An exact collection of the works of Doctor Jackson ... such as were not published before...*, London: R. Norton for Timothy Garthwait, 1654; *Maran atha: or Dominus veniet. Commentaries upon the articles of the Creed never heretofore printed...* by Thomas Jackson..., comp. B. Oley, London: A. Maxey for Timothy Garthwait, 1657; *A priest to the temple, or, The countrey parson his character, and rule of holy life by Mr. Geo. Herbert...*, ed. B. Oley, London: T. Roycroft for Benjamin Tooke, 1671; *The works of the reverend and learned divine, Thomas Jackson, sometime president of Corpus Christi College in Oxon such as were, and such as never before were printed in three volumes...*, comp. B. Oley, London: Andrew Clark, 1673.

¹⁵ Trevor-Roper, "Laudianism and Political Power", pp.70-1, 74.

¹⁶ A.J. Hegarty, "Jackson, Thomas (*bap.* 1578, *d.* 1640)" in ODNB, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14551> (accessed April 4, 2007).

¹⁷ Ferrar, *Life* in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, p.62. Jackson was often the object of Calvinists' slurs, such as the claim that he would poison Oxford with his Arminian drugs (Trevor-Roper, "Laudianism and Political Power", p.74). John Ferrar made reference to Jackson in recounting the Ferrars' response to their portrayal in *The Arminian Nunnery*. The phrase in question, "better to beare it with patience, *& to doe as meeke Dr Jackson had done*" (my italics) is from the Baker MS, and is omitted in Muir & White's version (p.111).

¹⁸ Byng, letter, in Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.45-6.

¹⁹ W. Gerald Marshall, "The Interpenetrations of Time: Izaak Walton and the Transformation of Hagiography" in W. Gerald Marshall (ed. & intro.), *The Restoration Mind*, Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1997, p.203. For the style of Walton's use of analogies between his biographical subjects (in this case, Donne) and Biblical figures and saints, see Judith H. Anderson, *Biographical Truth: The Representation of Historical Persons in Tudor-Stuart Writing*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1984, pp.65-8. Walton's somewhat oblique relation, via Hooker, to another famous devout community of the earlier seventeenth-century is outlined in by Paul G. Stanwood in his "Community and Social Order in the Great Tew Circle" in *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England*, eds Claude L. Summers & Ted-Larry Pebworth, Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 2000, pp.183-4.

and one whom he should serve, and at the other end of his life, his sudden arousal from sleep on his deathbed by a sweet presentiment of “the great king’s feast.”²⁰ The miraculous and prophetic episodes are utterly conventional (in the English context familiar from the time of Bede), such as young Nicholas’s hairbreadth escape from being knocked off a narrow alpine path by a runaway ass with a piece of wood on its back whilst on his way to Italy was met with local wonderment and his guide’s claim that “God’s angel did turn the piece of timber”.²¹ His corpse did not putrefy, “but was most fair and sweet, and ... his right arm, hand, and fingers were so lithe and flexible as if they were of a living man,” though the rest of his body was stiff.²² And apparently Nicholas fulfilled his own prophecy by effecting John’s financial rescue and that of another (unknown) branch of his family after the Virginia Company collapsed.²³

Saints’ legends and exemplary lives have long been a feature of Christian devotional culture, and many different types were produced in Europe during the early modern period. After the Reformation, religious biography was an important factor in forming the distinct confessional identities of Roman Catholics and many groups of Protestants alike, variously shaped by (be it in continuity with or diverging from) local traditions and well-known models such as those of the *Legenda Aurea*, or taking inspiration from ancient texts newly made available, such as Rosweyde’s *Vitae Patrum*, published in Latin in 1628. In the context of seventeenth-century England, the enormous cultural influence that Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* had exerted since the first edition appeared in 1563 is particularly notable (not forgetting the equivalent martyrological literature of English Catholicism), alongside the proliferation of puritan exemplary literature: funeral sermons; lives, including the works composed and compiled by the prolific Samuel Clarke (1599-1682); and autobiographies.²⁴

²⁰ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.43-4, 117-8.

²¹ “His deliverance from the peril of the timber.” Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.52.

²² Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.118.

²³ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.60.

²⁴ Thomas S. Freeman provides an overview of recent literature early modern English martyrology in his two review essays “So Much at Stake: Martyrs and Martyrdom in Early Modern England” (review essay), *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 57:3 (2006), pp.535-41 and “Early modern martyrs” (review essay), *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52:4 (2001), pp.696-701. For English Catholic martyrs see Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1537-1603*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002. Two examples from the mass of ‘puritan’ exemplary literature are: Phillip Stubbes, *A Christal Glasse for Christian Women. Containing a most excellent discourse of the godly life and Christian death of Mistris Katherine Stubbes*, London, 1591; and Simeon Ashe, *Gray Hayres Crowned with Grace, a sermon preached ...at the funerall of that Revd, eminently learned and faithful minister of Jesus Christ, Mr. Thomas Gataker*, London, 1654. Katherine Stubbes appears in the St Andrew’s Day, 30 November, session of the Little Academy at Little Gidding in 1632: Sharland, *Story Books*, p.236. For the Little Academy, see chapter 4, below. Puritan autobiographies began to appear in significant numbers after 1650. Owen C. Watkins, *The Puritan Experience*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972, p.25. Clarke’s lives were published from 1650 (*The Marrow of Ecclesiastical Historie*) to 1683 (*The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons in this Later Age*). For a perspective on women in this genre, see Jacqueline Eales, “Samuel Clarke and the ‘Lives’ of Godly Women in Seventeenth-Century England” in W.J. Sheils & D. Wood (eds), *Studies in Church History* 27: *Women in the Church*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp.365-76.

John Ferrar would have written aware of the conventions of at least some of these forms of spiritual biography.

As it turned out, Oley never did write his own biography of Nicholas Ferrar. Still, the *Life* cannot be separated from the ends and conventions of contemporary ecclesiastical biography. Moreover, it is the product of conscious memorialising, crafted by persons convinced of the worth of its subject, intent on presenting his life as a model one and offering it to a general audience, and set on participating in the tangled ecclesiological debates of the 1650s.

Despite being busy with various tasks relating to the upkeep of his household and the concordance projects discussed previously, and dallying with thoughts of far-removed Virginia, it remains the case that when John began collecting his thoughts for Nicholas's *Life* he was growing old, facing the continuation of his family's diminished fortunes, and lying low in the unstable political climate. His grief at losing Nicholas was probably profound and certainly his desire to create a fitting monument to him was strong. In such a context it is conceivable that he was moved also, in reflecting upon them, to chronicle the achievements of his family in its most successful phases.

John's portrayal suggests that in his estimation, the pinnacle of the Ferrars' history was the episode of devout living at Little Gidding shaped by Nicholas, "his last and best times".²⁵ One might suspect that the distinction their father attained in London's merchant community and the concomitant ideals and good repute which he and Nicholas carried through into their Virginia Company dealings (as opposed to the bald, materialistic facts of their wealth and influence) might also have ranked highly in John's appraisal. Clearly, he identified proudly with the colonialist objectives of the Company, and he did not refrain from countenancing questions of profitability. But while these considerations are assigned some credence in the *Life*, they are largely beside the point of its main purpose of celebrating Nicholas and the values privileged in his programme at Little Gidding. That is to say, in the biography, John offers a picture of his brother's exceptional piety and wisdom, his righteousness demonstrated in his relinquishing the trappings of worldliness in favour of a simple, retired life of Christian witness. Yet just as Nicholas's concern for the spiritual wellbeing of his family is valorised, and indeed the reason why the Ferrars feature in his *Life* is because his commitment to his family was such an important, definitive aspect of it, so too, by implication, does John present the family as praiseworthy for their conformity with and commitment to Nicholas's prescriptions. The family's esteem for godliness proves their virtue, as does the tacit fact that Nicholas is a product of and a credit

²⁵ Robert Byng avowing that Little Gidding was Nicholas's greatest achievement, letter in Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.46.

to the family. The argument is somewhat circular: to lionise Nicholas was to honour his whole family, especially given he spent so many years living with them and for them, as John's account contends.

If John's *Life* of Nicholas is simultaneously an encomium of his brother and, implicitly, a work extolling the Ferrar family, then it would seem to betray nostalgia in John, which stirred up his will to memorialise, to produce a textual recreation of the family as it had been in a time of good fortune. The immediate functions of the nostalgic recreation of the past in John's family history included bolstering the surviving Ferrars' identities as Ferrars, and encouraging pride by demonstrating their uprightness and that of their direct forbears. It evoked the memory of the first years at Little Gidding, when high ideals were allegedly realised, lived out, every day, by their own kin. Largely via the strategy of confirming Nicholas's right thinking and reasserting that of family members by association, the *Life* helped to affirm their relationships, connections and commitments, within and outside the family. To serve these ends John created a romanticised image of Nicholas's dispensation at Little Gidding in the *Life*. Through the conventions of biography – even hagiography – he manipulated the account in ways distinct from the distortions attributable to age, distance in time and the vagaries of human recollection.

Though the effects of the *Life* mentioned thus far were primarily intangible, working on mindsets, it nonetheless had pragmatic consequences for the Ferrars too. It invoked the past as a means of safeguarding their present and future. The *Life* created an important heritage for the Ferrars as they entered the second half of the seventeenth century. Beyond giving its members a sense of validation (a genealogy of the present), the record of how the family arrived at its current situation was defensive insofar as it provided them with a clean pedigree, a vindication of past actions and convictions to acquit as much as to encourage those inheriting the Little Gidding reputation. John conjured up a virtual patrimony for the childless Nicholas to confer upon his relatives, perhaps hopeful that, with its vivid hagiographical character, they would be sanctified by association. It was a picture of the family that the current members could live off, drawing consolation from it, strengthening their confessional identity by it, offering it for the approbation of others, or using it to deflect extraneous censure, then leaving it in turn to posterity. It was an image they could sell, well-suited to the defence of the beleaguered communal identities both of the Little Gidding household (however little John's picture actually resembled the actuality of Nicholas's time) and of the suppressed Church of England.

The pious picture that the *Life* seeks to present is only one angle on the different Ferrar identities that are discussed in this thesis, and, being constructed through text, it exemplifies a typical method that the Ferrars used to fashion relationships and identities.

Its objective as a biography was to depict a consistent and positive image of its subject, Nicholas Ferrar the individual, and insofar as his family was pertinent to his life story, to show a body unified in respect for their godly quasi-patriarch. Yet scrutiny reveals fractures and complications in the vision, a multiplicity of individual Ferrars and versions of the patrilineal family, thus challenging the conception that they were an early-modern family exceptional and indeed venerable for fulfilling contemporary ideals of unity of identity, purpose and mind, and confounding the double apologetical project of the *Life*.

Historiography of the Ferrars and Little Gidding

Writing the history of Little Gidding has been consistently and almost exclusively the business of historians of, and commonly members of, the Church of England. Large-scale publications on the subject have been issued sporadically, though the total amount of literature is not inconsiderable. These accounts of the Ferrars tend to have common structural and thematic features, to some extent generated by the concentrated Anglican interest, in keeping with the opinions and purposes of the writers. Typically, works on Little Gidding are more or less biographies of Nicholas, organised chronologically and focusing on his exemplary piety and the commendable form of Anglican devotion that he facilitated. Brief digressions on family members fill out the picture of the domestic context of his later life.

Little Gidding is visible in historical studies of seventeenth-century England, mentioned from time to time as a place of fleeting recourse for the embattled Charles I.²⁶ The Ferrars also appear in various roles; for example as landowners who respected the property of their parish, or as a community sharing religious convictions notable for their similarity to those of George Herbert, the renowned poet-parson and Nicholas Ferrar's friend.²⁷ Yet coverage of this sort is superficial, and generally does not offer sustained or original analysis regarding Nicholas and his family. The Ferrars have been incorporated fully into the confessional history and mythology of Anglicanism and have not been studied in any detail in other, non-Anglican or non-religious genres of early modern

²⁶ Charles Carlton, *Charles I, the Personal Monarch*, London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983, p.307; Pamela Tudor-Craig, "Charles I and Little Gidding" in Richard Ollard & Pamela Tudor-Craig (eds), *For Veronica Wedgwood These Studies in Seventeenth Century History*, London: Collins, 1986, pp.174-87. For John Ferrar's account of Charles I's visit to Little Gidding in 1642: MS Tangye 46. 78/675, Library of the Museum of London, London. It was printed in late nineteenth century: Este, "Charles I at Little Gidding", *Notes & Queries*, 8th series, 7 (Jan-Jun 1895), pp.321-22.

²⁷ Christopher Hill included two brief references to the Ferrars in his *Economic Problems of the Church: From Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963 (1956)), commenting on the dilapidated state of Little Gidding church when the family arrived in 1925, p.142, and on Mrs Ferrar's restitution of the impropriated tithes and glebe to the parish, p.272.

historiography. They were not considered in, or in relation to, the mid twentieth-century debates spurred by the theories of R. H. Tawney, Hugh Trevor-Roper and Lawrence Stone concerning the rise or decline of the English gentry.²⁸ There is no volume about the Ferrars alongside monographs on gentry families such as the Newdigates, the Harleys or the Verneys where the historian might expect to find one, and they do not appear amongst the gentry surveyed by Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes.²⁹ Indeed they are more or less absent from modern social history in general. The Ferrars have not yet received substantial treatment in studies of the early modern family, gender, or mercantilism,³⁰ or of English regional history, including studies of the peri-Civil War era such as Clive Holmes's *The Eastern Association in the English Civil War*.³¹

The Ferrars have become sidelined in this way because they have not been contextualised properly, hence this thesis's objective of returning them to the early seventeenth-century and applying methods of studying that era current amongst historians of the family and gender in order to develop new understandings of their family life.

Examining the historiography of Little Gidding demonstrates the continuing significance, for a particular community of faith, of the secluded early modern household, and how its meaning has been mediated within that Anglican culture. Together with a survey of the seventeenth-century primary sources, assessing their relation to subsequent depictions of Little Gidding, it provides important background for the present study of the Ferrar family's years with Nicholas at Little Gidding. Unlike many previous works, this study is not intended to be a biography of Nicholas, and it attends to some of the matters elided in foregoing versions of the Ferrars' story owing to biases, lacunae and silences, such as gender, relationships, and the sometimes animated and often repetitive dynamics of family life. Furthermore, as stated in the Introduction, it offers new, direct interrogation of the primary source material for the history of the Ferrars, including a range of seventeenth-

²⁸ The landmark publications in this debate were R. H. Tawney, "Harrington's Interpretation of his Age", *Proceedings of the British Academy* 27 (1941), pp.199-223 and "The Rise of the Gentry, 1558-1640", *Economic History Review* 11 (1941), pp.1-38; Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Gentry, 1540-1640, Economic History Review*, Supplement 1 (1953); and Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965. For summaries of these arguments, see Felicity Heal & Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994, pp.433-4 and G. E. Mingay, *The Gentry: The Rise and Fall of a Ruling Class*, London & New York: Longman, 1976, pp.50-53.

²⁹ Vivienne Larminie, *Wealth, Kinship, and Culture: the Seventeenth-Century Newdigates of Arbury and Their World*, New York: Boydell, 1995; Jacqueline Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads: The Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the Outbreak of the English Civil War*, Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990; Miriam Slater, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century: the Verneys of Claydon House*, London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984; Susan Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late Stuart England: The Cultural Worlds of the Verneys, 1660-1720*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999; John Broad, *Transforming English Rural Society: The Verneys and the Claydons, 1600-1820*, Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

³⁰ Richard Grassby makes two brief references to statements from the will of Nicholas Ferrar sen. in his *Kinship and Capitalism: Marriage, Family, and Business in the English-Speaking World, 1580-1720*, Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press & Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp.120, 177.

³¹ London: Cambridge University Press, 1974.

century documents from the family archive. The perspectives gained via the use of these alternative sources decentre John Ferrar's point of view and challenge the depiction of life at Little Gidding in his biography of Nicholas. This strategy further reveals the similarity of many aspects of the Ferrars' values and domestic practices to those of other gentle households in early Stuart England, and casts their more unusual habits into stark relief.

Nonetheless, the process of removing the *Life* from the central place it has hitherto occupied in studies of the Ferrars must begin with the deconstruction of the text itself, placing it in its own textual context. A comprehensive bibliographical review of work on Nicholas Ferrar and Little Gidding features in Lynette R. Muir and John A. White's 1996 volume *Materials for the Life of Nicholas Ferrar*.³² They offer a reconstruction of the original biography of Nicholas composed by his brother John around 1655, synthesised from the various extant versions. As discussed above, John was prompted to write by an anonymous historian, probably the Revd Barnabas Oley. The *Life* is an important but very partial history. It includes the only description of daily life in the household there, written by one of its members, but the veracity of this account must be questioned. It seems unlikely that fitting as many activities as John Ferrar lists into a day would be possible. The garrulous, adulatory portrayal of Nicholas has formed the basis for most subsequent studies; the enduring interest in his character is a measure of its success. Hence its reception history merits attention.

Many years passed before John's *Life* of Nicholas was published, but two of Nicholas's contemporaries printed brief biographical notes about him in larger volumes concerning George Herbert. Oley included a short passage in the preface to *The Country Parson*, published as part of his edition of Herbert's *Remains* in 1652³³, and Izaak Walton made a brief but complimentary diversion on "Mr Nicholas Farrer (who got the reputation of being call'd Saint Nicholas, at the age of six years)" in his 1670 biography of Herbert, one of his post-Restoration ecclesiastical *Lives*.³⁴ However, the *Life* was copied out several times by hand.

Today five manuscript versions of the *Life* exist, largely owing to the interest of non-juring clergymen of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, in particular Francis Turner (1637–1700), bishop of Ely, sometime Master of St John's College,

³² Muir & White, *Materials*, Bibliography, pp.xiii-xxi, and Introduction pp.3-22.

³³ George Herbert, *A Priest to the Temple, or, The Country Parson*, in *Herbert's remains, or, sundry pieces of that sweet singer of the temple, Mr George Herbert ...* Comp. Oley, Barnabas. London: printed for Timothy Garthwait, 1652; George Herbert, *The Country Parson, The Temple*, ed. & intro John N. Wall, New York: Paulist Press, 1981, p.xix; Muir and White, *Materials for the Life of Nicholas Ferrar*, p.xi.

³⁴ Izaak Walton, *The Lives of John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert and Robert Sanderson*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956 (1640-1678); Wotton was not a churchman. See David Novarr, *The Making of Walton's Lives*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958, and for a counter-argument, Jessica Martin, *Walton's Lives: Conformist Commemorations and the Rise of Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Cambridge and Vice-Chancellor of the University, followed by the Oxford antiquary Thomas Hearne (*bap.* 1678, *d.* 1735) and the scholar-physician Dr Samuel Jebb (1693/4–1772).³⁵ Aside from their antiquarian curiosity, these men preserved the biography to promote the importance of Ferrar's contemplative life in the English Church, and to use his position as a point of reference for their own views and quandaries (though none of them chose to emulate their hero by retiring from public life). By 1921 one author could assert boldly that “[f]uture historians of the English Church will have no hesitation in regarding the Nonjurors as the spiritual descendants of Nicholas Ferrar and his famous community at Little Gidding”.³⁶ Despite this confidence, no historian has provided a basis for assuming this continuity more substantial than the non-jurors' sympathy with the Ferrars' devotional proclivities, whereas the link is, in fact, very concrete. A clause of Mary Collet's 1680 will reads:

I give to my honoured friends the Reverend Doctor Gunning Lord Bishopp of Ely, the Reverend Doctor Joseph Bemond [i.e. Beaumont], The Reverend Doctor Francis Turner, Mr Barnaby Oly Clerke, Mr Ferdinando Berridge Clerke and to Mr Edward Fowler clerke to every one of them a Ring of the price of Twenty Shillings³⁷.

Never married, nearly 80 years old and living in the parish of Marylebone when she died, Mary named a great many beneficiaries in her will, amongst them this selection of clergymen including both Francis Turner and Barnabas Oley.

Several other eighteenth-century clergymen of antiquarian interests were moved to write about Nicholas Ferrar. Francis Peck (1692–1743) was a keen antiquary, fascinated by the history of England in the seventeenth century and expert in the county histories of Lincolnshire, where he was born, Rutland and Leicestershire.³⁸ He wrote voluminously in a “chaotic and verbose style” from the vicarage at Goadby Marwood in Leicestershire and funded most of his publications himself. A correspondent with Hearne and other leading antiquaries, he left a stash of unpublished and unfinished manuscripts when he died. Amongst them was “The Complete Church of England Man, Exemplified in the Holy Life

³⁵ For a list of ‘known extant manuscript copies of John Ferrar's materials for the life of his brother Nicholas’ see Muir & White, *Materials*, p.xiii, and on the works of the non-jurors, pp.6–7. For lives of Turner, Hearne and Jebb: Paul Hopkins, “Turner, Francis (1637–1700)” in *ODNB*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2006, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27849> (accessed March 28, 2007); Theodor Harmsen, “Hearne, Thomas (*bap.* 1678, *d.* 1735)” in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12827> (accessed March 28, 2007); J. F. Payne, “Jebb, Samuel (1693/4–1772)”, rev. Claire L. Nutt in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14686> (accessed March 28, 2007).

³⁶ H.P.K. Skipton, “Little Gidding and the Non-Jurors”, *Church Quarterly Review* 93 (Oct 1921), p.53.

³⁷ Will of Mary Collet alias Farrer of Little Gidding, Hunts, dat. 7 Oct 1680, prob. 11 Nov 1680, Bath Quire nos 124–85, PROB 11/364, PCC, TNA.

³⁸ On Peck see David Boyd Haycock, “Peck, Francis (1692–1743)” in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21738> (accessed March 29, 2007).

of Mr. Nicholas Ferrar”, completed around the mid-1730s. Hearne had submitted it for publication at Cambridge but it was refused a license and the manuscript was subsequently lost.³⁹

Dr Peter Peckard’s *Memoirs of the Life of Mr. Nicholas Ferrar*, on the other hand, did not meet with censure, perhaps because of the elevated status of its author. Heavily based on Peck’s work, it was published in 1790, two years before Peckard was installed as dean of Peterborough.⁴⁰ Peckard (*bap.* 1717, *d.* 1797) was master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, from 1781 until his death and became Vice-Chancellor of the University in 1784. A latitudinarian, a civil libertarian and an abolitionist, Peckard believed reform was necessary to bring the practices and doctrines of the Church into line with the simplicity of Scriptural prescription, which casts some light on his interest in Little Gidding and its apparent conformity with the ideals of primitive Christianity.⁴¹ A more immediate influence was the fact of his marriage to Martha Ferrar (1729–1805), a great-great-granddaughter of John Ferrar. Martha had inherited the collected papers of the Ferrar family, dating from the late sixteenth century, and on her decease they passed into her husband’s possession. They were deposited in Magdalene College library when Peckard died, and have remained there ever since. Peckard also endowed two open Ferrar scholarships at Magdalene to commemorate the family.

Little Gidding was included in the survey of Huntingdonshire parishes that the Revd Benjamin Hutchinson (*bap.* 1733, *d.* 1804) undertook late in the eighteenth century with the aim of compiling a volume to be called “The Natural History and Antiquities of Huntingdonshire”.⁴² Hutchinson’s friend, the Revd Charles Favell, joined him on a visit to

³⁹ Muir & White, *Materials*, p.8.

⁴⁰ Peter Peckard, *Memoirs of the Life of Mr. Nicholas Ferrar*, Cambridge: J. Archdeacon for J. & J. Merrill, 1790. On Peckard, see John Walsh, “Peckard, Peter (*bap.* 1717, *d.* 1797)” in ODNB, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21740> (accessed March 29, 2007); John Walsh & Ronald Hyam, “Peter Peckard: Liberal Churchman and Anti-Slave Trade Campaigner”, *Magdalene College Occasional Papers* 16 (1998), Magdalene College, Cambridge. Examples of Peter Peckard’s published writings: *Subscription. Or historical extracts. Humbly inscribed to the Right Revd the Bishops: and, to the petitioners; shewing the impropriety of their petition*, London: W. Hay, 1776 (printed anonymously, explaining his theological position); *Am I not a man? and a brother? With all humility addressed to the British legislature*, Cambridge: J. Archdeacon, 1788; *Justice and mercy recommended, particularly with reference to the slave trade. A sermon preached before the University of Cambridge*, Cambridge: J. Archdeacon, 1788.

⁴¹ On the bicentenary of the passage of the Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade (March 1807), it is especially appropriate to note Peckard’s commitment to abolitionism. In addition to his programme of speeches and publications promoting civil rights and denouncing slavery, in his capacity as Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge he set the topic for the Members’ Prize for a Latin Essay in 1795: “*Anne liceat inuitos in servitutem dare?*” (“Is it lawful to enslave the unconsenting?”). Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846), a graduate of St John’s College, wrote the winning essay, as he had in 1794. He read it in the Senate House to great acclaim in June 1785 and it was published the next year by James Phillips. Thus Clarkson was set on his life’s work as one of the greatest individual contributors to the abolitionist cause.

⁴² Joyce Ransome, “Little Gidding in 1796”, *Records of Huntingdonshire* 3:9 (2001-02), pp.13-28. For Hutchinson’s life: P. C. Saunders, “Hutchinson, Benjamin (*bap.* 1733, *d.* 1804)” in ODNB, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/64898> (accessed 2 April 2007). As Saunders states, when

Little Gidding in May 1796 (Hutchinson had determined to visit every parish) and at a later date delivered a lecture on site containing his observations of the place. Favell sent Hutchinson the transcript of this speech in June 1796, appealing to his friend's superior recollection to help correct the account. The character of Favell's enquiry was very empirical: alongside the description in his speech of crudely wrought murals in the old Ferrar house and tombstones outside the church, in his letter he discussed with fascination a yellow-bellied newt, in keeping with his colleague's well-developed scientific interests.⁴³ The letter betrays no concern with the Ferrars' communal life or religious example. Hutchinson's Huntingdonshire history did not go to press, probably because of the mental illness he suffered in his last years.

The biographical trend in Ferrar historiography continued into the nineteenth century with a series of books largely reproducing material from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A short version of Peckard's *Memoirs* was included in Christopher Wordsworth's six-volume *Ecclesiastical Biography*, first published in 1810.⁴⁴ Terence Macdonough's *Brief Memoirs of Nicholas Ferrar* was based on Turner's biography. Released in 1829 as the work of a "Clergyman of the Established Church", the second edition printed in 1837 bore Macdonough's name.⁴⁵ Brief, positive, seventeenth-century accounts of Little Gidding became available to an early Victorian readership with the republication of Herbert's *Remains* in 1836 and Thomas Fuller's *History of the Worthies of England* (1662) in 1840.⁴⁶ Then in 1855 the book which Muir and White call "the most influential of all accounts of Nicholas Ferrar" appeared: J.E.B. Mayor's *Nicholas Ferrar: two lives, by his brother John and by Doctor Jebb*.⁴⁷ Mayor was a Cambridge classicist, sometime master of St John's College and a bibliophile of wide scholarly expertise. He regularly referred to details of history of the early modern Church in his sermons, and his writings include editions of or materials for several historical biographies, including those of Archbishop John Williams (1582–1650, formerly Ferrar's diocesan as bishop of Lincoln), the sacramentalist bishop of Gloucester, Godfrey Goodman (1583–1656), and cleric-physician Matthew Robinson (*hap.*

Hutchinson announced he was compiling the Huntingdonshire volume in 1794 the "production of folio county histories was at its height".

⁴³ Hutchinson was made FRS in 1795. Saunders, "Hutchinson", ODNB, 2004.

⁴⁴ Christopher Wordsworth, *Ecclesiastical Biography, or Lives of Eminent Men Connected with the History of Religion in England from the Commencement of the Reformation to the Revolution*, 6 vols, London: F.C. & J. Rivington, 1810. Nicholas Ferrar appears in vol. 5.

⁴⁵ [Terence Michael Macdonough], *Brief Memoirs of Nicholas Ferrar, founder of a Protestant religious establishment at Little Gidding, Huntingdonshire, collected from a narrative by Dr Turner*, Bristol: J. Chilcott, 1829 (2nd edn, 1837).

⁴⁶ George Herbert, *The Remains of that Sweet Singer of the Temple, George Herbert*, 2 vols, London: Pickering, 1836–38. Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England*, 3 vols, ed. P. Austin Nuttall, London: Thomas Tegg, 1840.

⁴⁷ Muir & White, *Materials*, p.9. For Mayor's life: J. E. Sandys, "Mayor, John Eyton Bickersteth (1825–1910)", rev. Richard Smail, in ODNB; online edn, ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2006, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34967> (accessed April 2, 2007).

1628, *d.* 1694).⁴⁸ Mayor shared Nicholas Ferrar's belief in moderation of diet and was a strict vegetarian for much of his life. It is probable that the impact of his book about Ferrar was linked to devotional concerns stirred up by the Oxford Movement. Like others who has studied it or sought to republish it, Mayor's attraction to the *Life* was thus associated with contemporary interests.

Mayor's work continued the trend of historical biography but also marked a shift towards formal academic study of the Ferrars that developed (parallel with the academic discipline of history itself) from the mid-nineteenth century. Little Gidding's place in histories of the seventeenth century and in English religious and ecclesiastical history is discussed further below. It is one of the different sorts of writing about Little Gidding, distinct from biographies of Nicholas Ferrar, which appeared during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Such writing is divisible into rough categories, as follow, all of which persist today. Specialist studies of the bookbinding practised at Little Gidding have been written by bibliographers and other enthusiasts, often based on examination of surviving bound volumes.⁴⁹ Descendants of the Ferrars and Collets have published genealogical works or histories focusing on their family background.⁵⁰ Devotional literature had been produced to encourage veneration of Nicholas and emulation of his and his family's devout way of life, often published in popular forums such as Christian magazines or in accessible volumes such as Margaret Cropper's *Flame touches Flame* (1947), in which Nicholas Ferrar features alongside personages such as Henry Vaughan and Margaret Godolphin as one of the under-acknowledged Anglican "saints" of the seventeenth century.⁵¹ A sub-set of these devotional publications, printed towards the end of twentieth century, was produced in association with modern Christian organisations based at Little Gidding whose members endeavoured to pursue communal religious life there as the Ferrars had done.⁵² In addition,

⁴⁸ J.E.B. Mayor (ed.), "Letters of Archbishop Williams ... with materials for his life", *Cambridge Antiquarian Communications: Being Papers Presented at Meetings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, 2 (1864) & 3 (1879); Mayor (ed.), "Original letters of Godfrey Goodman together with materials for his life", *Cambridge Antiquarian Communications* 2 (1864); Mayor (ed.), *The Life of Matthew Robinson*, Cambridge, 1856.

⁴⁹ For example, Cyril Davenport, "Little Gidding Bindings," *Bibliographica* 2:6 (1896), pp.129-49; Anon., "Nicholas Ferrar, Little Gidding, and the Bookbinding by the Nuns," *Bookworm* 3 (Nov 1890), p.366; Howard M Nixon, "A Little Gidding Binding, c.1635-40", *Book Collector* 11 (1962), p.330. Some confusion surrounds the Little Gidding bindings: items not bound at Little Gidding but of a similar style to those bound there have been misattributed to the Ferrars and Collets.

⁵⁰ Notably, John Dunlap Collett, *Genealogy of the Descendants of John Collett, Born 1578, Died March 29th, 1659, of Little Gidding and London, England, and United States of America*, Greenfield, Indiana, 1929.

⁵¹ Margaret Cropper, *Flame touches Flame*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1947. Articles in religious magazines include: H. P. Palmer, "Nicholas Ferrar and the Religious Society at Little Gidding", *Good Words* 30 (1889), p.256; Anon., "Nicholas Ferrar and Little Gidding," *Church Eclectic* 20 (1892-3), pp.1087-89; Mary Frances Coady, "Little Gidding: 'Where Prayer Has Been Valid'", *Commonweal* 115 (23 Sep 1988), pp.501-2.

⁵² For example, *The Little Gidding Prayer Book*, London: SPCK, 1986; Robert van de Weyer (ed.), *The English Spirit: The Little Gidding Anthology of English Spirituality*, Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1988 and *The Little Gidding Way*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1988. N.B. Robert van de Weyer was a founder of the ecumenical Christian community based at Little Gidding in the 1970s-90s, which evolved into the Community of Christ the Sower, and sometime minister of Little Gidding church. A former non-stipendiary

a considerable amount of fiction has been written based around the Ferrars and Little Gidding, often with devotional functions in mind; so too poems, the most famous of which is the last of T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, "Little Gidding".⁵³

The significance of poetry as a medium through which writers (and readers) developed and expressed their spirituality in the early Stuart period may explain some of the poetry that Little Gidding has inspired since, in connection with the consequence that has been ascribed to devotional poetry in the Anglican tradition.⁵⁴ Poetry certainly formed one of the topics of the strain of academic work on the Ferrars that developed during the twentieth century. In part this can be attributed to the revival of interest in the metaphysical (and other) poets of the earlier seventeenth century after Eliot had critically rehabilitated or "discovered" them and raised them to prominence. Eliot's involvement boosted the level of attention already paid to the friendship and religious attitude that Nicholas Ferrar and George Herbert shared, ties which subsequent writers have sometimes imagined as being closer than in fact they were given the high probability that the two men never met in person, or did so not more than once. Oley wrote of Herbert and Ferrar's "managery of their most cordial and Christian friendship ... without the ceremonies of visits and compliments": "saw they not each other in many years, I think, scarce ever, but as members of one university, in their whole lives".⁵⁵

Poets attracted to or associated with Little Gidding in the seventeenth century had established their own reputations long before Eliot found them. Richard Crashaw's (1612/13–1648) connection with Little Gidding has generated its own spur of publications,

(and suspended) minister in the Church of England, he has published works of spirituality from various religious traditions apart from Christianity. The Community of Christ the Sower at Little Gidding disbanded in 1997, but an organisation of the same name claiming continuity with the religious experiment of their "founder", Nicholas Ferrar, exists in Luverne, Alabama. See their website: <http://www.christthesower.org/> (accessed April 4, 2007).

⁵³ T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1943/London: Faber & Faber, 1944. The poems were first published separately between 1935 and 1942. Multiple responses to Eliot's poem have addressed Nicholas, the Ferrars, and even Herbert, for example: Ronald Schuchard, "If I think, again, of this place": Eliot, Herbert, and the Way to 'Little Gidding'" in *Words in Time: New Essays on Eliot's Four Quartets*, ed. Edward Lobb, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993, pp.52-83. An earlier poem by Junior Barnaby [pseud. of Thomas James] was published as *Journey to Little Gidding*, Langley, 1856.

⁵⁴ The literature on this subject is extensive. For a useful recent study, see Reid Barbour, *Literature and Religious Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. On poetry in Anglican spirituality, see William L. Countryman, *The Poetic Imagination: An Anglican Spiritual Tradition*, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999.

⁵⁵ For example: A.G. Hyde, "Nicholas Ferrar and Little Gidding" in his *George Herbert and His Times*, London: Methuen; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906; T.O. Beachcroft, "Nicholas Ferrar and George Herbert", *Criterion* 12 (Oct 1932), pp.24-42; Gordon Ellsworth Bigelow, "The Relations between Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding and George Herbert and Richard Crashaw", unpublished MA thesis, Johns Hopkins University, 1947; G.L. Maber, "Nicholas Ferrar and George Herbert: their work and times", unpublished MA thesis, Manchester University, 1947; Daniel W. Doerksen, "Nicholas Ferrar, Arthur Woodnoth, and the Publication of George Herbert's *The Temple*", *George Herbert Journal* 3:1-2 (1979-80), pp.22-44; Amy M. Charles, "Herbert and the Ferrars: Spirituall Edification" in Edmund Miller & Robert DiYanni (eds), *Like Season'd Timber: New Essays on George Herbert*, New York: Peter Lang, 1987, pp.1-18; Oley, preface to *A priest to the temple, or, The country parson*, interpolated into Ferrar's *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.96-7.

in which substantial speculation can be found surrounding the Ferrars' role in Crashaw's eventual conversion to Roman Catholicism and his purported romantic relationship with Mary (or, on occasion, Anna) Collet.⁵⁶ Paul A. Parrish has drawn a "literary ellipse" of Cambridge poets, in which Joseph Beaumont (1616–1699) and Abraham Cowley (1618–1667) join Herbert, Crashaw and Ferrar (surely an honorary member).⁵⁷ Yet it is difficult to see what Parrish argues to have been the consequence of their association, other than remarking on the fact that from beliefs and acquaintances in common the younger men created a spiritual and artistic inheritance, apparently to convince themselves of the worthiness of their poetic identity. In any case, even historicist studies like this one do not tend to shed much light on the Ferrars. Perhaps the most useful insight to be derived from studies of this nature pertains to the forces governing how these associates represented one another in their writing. The character of that representation was necessarily shaped by the tropes of artistic courtesy they employed when writing about one another (that is, the conventions governing poetic and biographical dedications and prefaces), combined with the reverence they felt for each other and the piety of the milieu. Cowley's fulsome elegy for Crashaw, for example, opens "Poet and Saint! to thee alone are given / The two most sacred Names of Earth and Heaven."⁵⁸ Insufficient attention has been paid both to the particular rhetoric used in this context and to generic forms of expression when extrapolating biographical "facts" from their texts.

Little Gidding gained most popular attention neither through poetry nor indeed biographies like those found in Mayor's edition, but through fiction: above all Joseph Henry Shorthouse's *John Inglesant*, a moral romance published in 1880.⁵⁹ The success of the novel, which featured a fictionalised but factually-based impression of the Ferrars' lives, may have stimulated the unearthing of the Ferrar records at Magdalene College around 1890.⁶⁰ Soon after *John Inglesant* was released, the Little Gidding "Story Books", transcripts of the dialogues of the Little Academy, were listed as new accessions in the *Catalogue of Additions to the British Museum in the Years 1894-1899*.⁶¹ Certainly more fictional writing about

⁵⁶ Such as: E. Cruwys Sharland, "Richard Crashaw and Mary Collett", *Church Quarterly Review* 73 (Jan 1912), p.359; Helen C. White, "Richard Crashaw: Little Gidding to Rome" in her *The Metaphysical Poets: A Study in Religious Experience*, New York: Macmillan, 1936; George Walton Williams, "Richard Crashaw and the Little Gidding Bookbinders", *Notes and Queries* n.s. 3 (1956), pp.9-10; Paul A. Parrish, "Richard Crashaw, Mary Collet, and the 'Arminian Nunnery' of Little Gidding" in *Representing Women in Renaissance England*, eds Claude L. Summers & Ted-Larry Pebworth, Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 1997, pp.187-200.

⁵⁷ The "ellipse" is a coined in Paul A. Parrish, "Reading Poets Reading Poets: Herbert and Crashaw's Literary Ellipse" in *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England*, eds Claude L. Summers & Ted-Larry Pebworth, Columbia & London: University of Missouri Press, 2000, pp.115-37. Parrish explains the term on p.116.

⁵⁸ Abraham Cowley, "On the death of Mr Crashaw" in his *Poems*, London: H. Moseley, 1656, ll.1-2.

⁵⁹ Joseph Henry Shorthouse, *John Inglesant: A Romance*, Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1880.

⁶⁰ Muir & White, *Materials*, p.10.

⁶¹ A London University MA thesis was completed with reference to the Story Books in 1924: A.M. Hoare,

Little Gidding followed, beginning with Emma Marshall's *A Haunt of Ancient Peace* in 1897.⁶² Some years later Elsie Kathleen Seth-Smith, also a noted writer of historical fiction for younger readers, published a highly romantic novel, *The Way of Little Gidding*, focusing on the experience of Judith, one of the Collet sisters. Seth-Smith depicted Judith as a plain but passionate 19-year-old, bored by the strictures of life at Little Gidding – one of the few authors in all of the literature on the topic to acknowledge that such an experience was conceivable – and gave her a tortuous Civil War love affair.⁶³

Marshall's was one amongst a cluster of Little Gidding books issued in the 1890s, including Jane F.M. Carter's historical narrative *Nicholas Ferrar: His Household and His Friends* (1892), and Emily Cruwys Sharland's edited volume of some of the dialogues, *The Story Books of Little Gidding* (1899), which was significant for reproducing actual seventeenth-century texts written by members of the Ferrar household.⁶⁴ In 1907 they were joined by H.P.K. Skipton's *The Life and Times of Nicholas Ferrar*, and a stream of popular and devotional publications on Little Gidding followed, running through the first few decades of the twentieth century.⁶⁵

In 1938 two important volumes were released: *The Ferrar Papers* by Bernard

"Nicholas Ferrar, with special reference to the Story Books of Little Gidding", unpublished MA thesis, University of London, 1924.

⁶² Emma Marshall, *A Haunt of Ancient Peace: Memories of Mr. Nicholas Ferrar's House at Little Gidding, and of His Friends Dr Donne and Mr George Herbert. A Story*, New York: Macmillan, 1896; London: Seeley & Co., 1897. Marshall was a prolific author of historical fiction for juvenile readers. As principal breadwinner after her husband's bank failed, she published nearly 200 books as well as caring for nine children. Amongst her titles are *In the East Country with Sir Thomas Browne [A Story]*, London: Seeley & Co., 1884 and *Under Salisbury Spire, in the days of George Herbert: the recollections of Magdalene Wydville*, London: Seeley & Co., 1890. Marshall's daughter wrote her biography: Beatrice Marshall, *Emma Marshall: a Biographical Sketch*, London: Seeley & Co., 1900. See also S.D. Mumm, "Writing for their Lives: Women Applicants to the Royal Literary Fund, 1840-1880", *Publishing History* 27 (1990), pp.27-48.

⁶³ E. K. Seth-Smith, *The Way of Little Gidding*, London: H.R. Allenson, 1914. The following extract gives some sense of Seth-Smith's rendering of Judith Collet and Little Gidding.

She saw her days following one another with an endless monotony, tracing the slow changes in herself until her face should grow lined like Mary's, and her hair should turn grey as Anna's was beginning to do. For them it seemed natural enough, but for herself, *no!* ... Had she but been born a boy! Even Edward, the despair of the family, who as a last resource had been shipped to the Indies, was doubtless enjoying that fairy-like New World... But she, Judith, was destined to spend her life environed by the muddy lanes of this Huntingdonshire village! (pp.15, 17)

⁶⁴ [J.F.M. Carter], *Nicholas Ferrar: His Household and His Friends*, ed. Revd T.T. Carter, London: Longmans & Co., 1892. Jane Carter's book was published anonymously, edited and introduced by her father, Revd T.T. Carter. Later she wrote *The life and times of John Kettlewell: with details of the history of the Nonjurors* (ed. T.T. Carter, London & New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1895), and her father's biography, *Life and Letters of the Rev. T. T. Carter: hon. canon of Christchurch, Oxford, and warden of the House of Mercy, Clewer* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1911). Thomas Thelluson Carter (1808-1901) was a prominent Tractarian, amongst other things a proponent of ritual, sacramental confession, social service, and the female religious life in the English Church. He helped to found the Community of St John the Baptist at Clewer, near Windsor (his parish), which had begun as refuge for "fallen" women, and supported it under its first superior, Mother Harriet Monsell (1811-1883). Widely published himself, Carter believed the Church of England had lost its way in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and was keen to see a return to the life of regular prayer exemplified at Little Gidding. Sharland, *Story Books*, as above.

⁶⁵ H.P.K. Skipton, *The Life and Times of Nicholas Ferrar*, London: A.R. Mowbray & Co., 1907.

Blackstone and *Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding* by Alan Maycock. The books were groundbreaking for being based on the authors' study of the collection of Ferrar family documents in the library of Magdalene College, Cambridge, and as such for being scholarly works. Blackstone's book consists of a composite biography of Nicholas Ferrar constructed from passages of different manuscript versions of John Ferrar's original *Life*, and reproductions of texts from the collection: the "Winding Sheet" dialogue on mortality and asceticism from the Little Academy; some "short moral histories"; and miscellaneous family letters. Blackstone was at Trinity College and had recently received his doctorate for a thesis entitled "George Herbert and Nicholas Ferrar: a study of thought and imagery in Jacobean devotional literature".⁶⁶ Whilst working on the Ferrar papers he joined T.S. Eliot's party and visited Little Gidding on 25 May 1936, accompanied by the dean of Magdalene College (where Eliot was an honorary Fellow), the Revd Hugh Fraser Stewart, and the dean's wife.⁶⁷ The same year he published some short pieces in the *Times Literary Supplement* based on his research: "Story-Books of Little Gidding: Wine and Poetry" on 21 March and "Discord at Little Gidding" on 1 August.⁶⁸ Blackstone became a literary scholar, notably publishing on Byron, Blake, Keats and Woolf. Religious concerns were not a prominent subject of his subsequent published academic work, apart from a 1950 article in the journal *Theology* entitled "Some notes on Lancelot Andrewes."⁶⁹

Maycock also worked on the Ferrar documents at Magdalene and in *Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding* he presented an extended, essentially biographical narrative to 1637, assembled from the various forms of material he found in the archive. He went on to publish *Chronicles of Little Gidding* in 1954, describing a period of twenty years of the Ferrars' lives at Little Gidding after Nicholas's death.⁷⁰ Maycock had studied at Clare, Nicholas's college, where he had first become interested in Little Gidding, and from the 1930s was employed in the Cambridge University executive. In 1946 (after the Second World War) he founded the Cambridge-based Society of the Friends of Little Gidding to assist in maintaining the fabric of the church, which was in bad repair. T.S. Eliot accepted his

⁶⁶ *Abstracts of Dissertations Approved for the Ph.D., M.Sc. and M.Litt. Degrees in the University of Cambridge during the academical year 1935-6*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937, pp.62-3.

⁶⁷ Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's New Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp.126-7; "People – T.S. Eliot at Little Gidding", Little Gidding Church, <http://www.littlegiddingchurch.org.uk/lgchtmlfiles/lgpeople2.html> (accessed April 2, 2007).

⁶⁸ Bernard Blackstone, "Story-Books of Little Gidding: Wine and Poetry", *TLS* 1781, (21 Mar 1936), p.238; "Discord at Little Gidding", *TLS* 1800 (1 Aug 1936), p.628. Blackstone seems to have found the prospect of sharing his knowledge of the Ferrars irresistible. Subsequent to both of these articles going to press, he had letters published in the *TLS* with supplying further information. First, in the edition following that in which "Story-Books" appeared, he wrote explaining slander against the Ferrars as recent as Carlyle: "Carlyle and Little Gidding [letter]", *TLS* 1782 (28 Mar 1936), p.278. Second, a fortnight after his piece on "Discord" he wrote to report the discovery of an unknown paper by George Herbert in the Ferrar archive: "A Paper by George Herbert", *TLS* 1802 (15 Aug 1936), p.664.

⁶⁹ Bernard Blackstone, "Some notes on Lancelot Andrewes", *Theology* 53:357 (1950), pp.94-101.

⁷⁰ A. L. Maycock, *Chronicles of Little Gidding*, London: SPCK, 1954.

invitation to become the Society's patron. After retiring, Maycock became the Keeper of the Old Library at Magdalene, and worked cataloguing Ferrar documents there until his death in 1968.⁷¹

Following Maycock's *Chronicles*, the only referenced books on Little Gidding have been A. M. Williams's *Conversations at Little Gidding* (1970), which presents two dialogues from the Little Academy with an introduction and commentary, and Muir and White's *Materials for the Life of Nicholas Ferrar*.⁷² All told, Little Gidding has featured only briefly in the field of historical studies, and the only in English ecclesiastical and religious histories of the post-Reformation period and in specific studies of the Church of England and the nature of Anglicanism. The Ferrars are mentioned in Felix R. Arnott's essay on "Anglicanism in the Seventeenth Century" that introduces P. E. More and F. L. Cross's monumental *Anglicanism* (1935), a volume which sets out to demonstrate the definitive qualities of the confession using passages from writings by its seventeenth-century adherents.⁷³ They also appear in *Love's Redeeming Work*, an anthology of texts written by members of the international Anglican Communion from the early modern era to the present which draws upon this more expansive base to exemplify for the early twenty-first century the range of spiritual identities that Anglicanism has encompassed.⁷⁴ Occasionally some members of the family have been considered in their role as merchant-colonists involved with the English plantation in Virginia.

As these lines of enquiry have progressed, primary documents written by or related to the Ferrars have been published from time to time. David R. Ransome is responsible for bringing various Ferrar texts to light in recent years, including Nicholas Ferrar's diatribe entitled *Sir Thomas Smith's Misgovernment of the Virginia Company* and his parliamentary diaries for 1624.⁷⁵ Ransome facilitated the 1992 release of microfilmed images of the entire

⁷¹ The Society has been re-established. For details, and a statement of objectives, see Jillian Wilkinson's "Narrative of the history of the Friends of Little Gidding, 1946 – present day", Little Gidding Church, <http://www.littlegiddingchurch.org.uk/lghtmlfiles/lghist3.html#folg0306> (accessed April 3, 2007).

⁷² Williams acknowledges the advice of his friend Alan Maycock in the preface to his book, *Conversations*, p.x. He was awarded a doctorate in Literature for further study on the topic in 1972: Alvin Marcus Williams, "Conversations at Little Gidding. 'On the Retirement of Charles V,' 'On the Austere Life'", unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1972.

⁷³ F.R. Arnott, "Anglicanism in the Seventeenth Century" in *Anglicanism: the Thought and Practice of the Church of England Illustrated from the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*, eds P.E. More & F.L. Cross, London: S.P.C.K; Milwaukee, 1935, pp.xli-lxxvi (Little Gidding is discussed on pp.lxix-lxx). Other examples include A. W. Harrison, *Arminianism*, London: Duckworth, 1937 and A. Tindal Hart, *The Country Clergy in Elizabethan and Stuart Times, 1558-1660*, London: Phoenix House, 1958.

⁷⁴ Rowell et al., *Love's Redeeming Work*, pp.163-66.

⁷⁵ Nicholas Ferrar, *Sir Thomas Smith's Misgovernment of the Virginia Company: a manuscript from the Devonshire papers at Chatsworth House*, ed. & intro. D.R. Ransome, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Roxburghe Club, 1990; D.R. Ransome, "The parliamentary papers of Nicholas Ferrar", pp.2-104.

collection of Ferrar documents at Magdalene. A digital edition will be available online in late 2007.⁷⁶

A Modern Anglican History

The process of fashioning a distinctly Anglican interpretation of the Ferrars has been continuous from the seventeenth century, yet a significant amount of the work of constructing and consolidating Little Gidding's position in the Anglican spiritual tradition occurred quite recently, in the first half of the twentieth century. The era witnessed a concentration of interest in Little Gidding that can be associated with contemporary efforts in the Church of England to investigate its own culture and identity, defining and legitimising communal identity via scrutiny of the Anglican past. Particular consequence was attributed to seventeenth-century devotees of the Church as the spiritual forebears of its modern members, elaborating on the nineteenth-century perception that the practical groundwork for the lived character of Anglicanism was established in the early Stuart period at the same time that the Church evolved some theological and ecclesiological principles of its own, building on Richard Hooker's (1554-1600) *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.⁷⁷ Margaret Cropper's attitude to the early Stuart period and the tone she adopts to express her interpretation of the Church's distinctive spiritual heritage are typical of writings associated with this process. Introducing her 1949 "study of six saints" – in addition to Godolphin and Vaughan they were Ferrar, Herbert, Thomas Ken and Jeremy Taylor – she writes:

they do present a picture of a type of sanctity which grew to its perfectness in our own Anglican Communion, in a special period, when the Church of England was at a vigorous stage of her growth, with an ardour heightened by suffering, that stirred the hearts of men and women to reach forward towards holiness.⁷⁸

While Blackstone and Maycock did not see "perfection" in their seventeenth-century subjects, neither did they go very far to contextualise the Ferrar venture or to

⁷⁶ D.R. Ransome, *Ferrar Papers*. Adam Matthew Digital will publish the Ferrar Papers online via subscription in late 2007. They will be searchable, rendering access to the information in the archive far easier and thereby stands to transform study of the Ferrars. Further documents related to the Virginia Company will be included in the resource. *Virginia Company Archives: The Ferrar Papers, 1590-1790, from Magdalene College, Cambridge*, Marlborough, Wilts: Adam Matthew Digital, forthcoming (2007). For information, see the website: <http://www.amdigital.co.uk/collections/Virginia-Company-Archives/default.aspx> (accessed April 4, 2007).

⁷⁷ Richard Hooker, *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie*, 8 vols, London, 1593-1648. For an argument that presents twenty-first century Anglicanism turning once more to its seventeenth-century heritage, see Philip F. Sheldrake, "Distinctive or all-embracing? Retrieving the foundations of an Anglican spirituality in a postmodern era", *Anglican Theological Review* 84:4 (Fall 2002), pp.839-53.

⁷⁸ Cropper, *Flame touches Flame*, p.vii.

analyse it critically; both construed the story of the community in ways that reveal the influence of contemporary values and their confessional biases. Given the historiographical context in which they wrote, it is constructive to read Blackstone, Maycock and others' work in light of the concept that Stephen Sykes and John Booty have dubbed "classic Anglicanism", which they found implicit in More and Cross and which was promulgated through many twentieth-century works of Anglican ecclesiastical history and devotional texts. The notion refers to "what many people believe Anglicanism to be": the form and character of religious life the Caroline divines in particular were held to characterise, "[c]onstrued in seventeenth-century England and strongly revived in the nineteenth century by the Tractarians ... [then] disseminated through the world by the rapid growth of the Anglican Communion."⁷⁹ It is difficult to fix upon a description of exactly what "classic Anglicanism" is, or what it meant in practice. But, as a recent explanation of the identity that developed during the years to 1650 suggests, this nebulous quality is perhaps the point.

What we see ... is the steady accumulation of materials not for a system but for a language, a style, and an imaginative frame of reference. If writers of the first century or so of the independent life of the Reformed English (and Irish and Welsh and – with some added complications – Scottish) Church give us a "classical" deposit of thought and image, it is not just a matter of chronological priority. There really were themes that gave coherence to the Reformed enterprise in Britain; and they issued in a style of holy life that certainly remained recognizable for the two and a half centuries following – rather reticent, perhaps rather passive in the eye of an unsympathetic observer, not afraid to quarry other traditions, even across the gulfs of serious theological disagreement, very reluctant (for good and ill) to draw firm lines between ecclesiastical and social service and obligation; at best, in a Hooker or a Herbert, combining a clear-eyed and unconsolated awareness of the fragility of human thinking and motivation with an equally clear-eyed and deeply charged awareness of the terrible mysteriousness of God's grace, an awareness at once sweet and joyful and strange and frightening. A dazzling darkness.⁸⁰

Sykes and Booty rightly flagged the risk that in accounting historically for "classic Anglicanism" its normativeness might be assumed;⁸¹ this follows from the fact that the concept itself is the name given to an approved character or "spirit" which inheres in those persons, texts, events and phenomena included in a selective historical narrative. That selective Church history was developed by the nineteenth-century Anglo-Catholic revivalists. Anglo-Catholicism grew out of the ground prepared earlier in the nineteenth century by the Tractarians: Anglo-Catholics stressed the continuity of the Catholic

⁷⁹ S.W. Sykes & J.E. Booty, *The Study of Anglicanism*, London & Philadelphia: SPCK/Fortress Press, 1988, p.ix. Notwithstanding their tendency to concentrate on the Caroline divines and others of moderate or Arminian convictions, More and Cross did include extracts of writing by distinctly puritanical individuals such as Richard Baxter in *Anglicanism*.

⁸⁰ Rowell et al., *Love's Redeeming Work*, p.12.

⁸¹ Sykes & Booty, *Study of Anglicanism*, p.xxii.

character of the English Church, including traditions of liturgy, sacramentalism, apostolic succession and high regard for the ordained priesthood, and re-established monasticism within Anglicanism.⁸² They gathered (what appeared to be) precedent for their ecclesiological views and expressed their claim on many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Church figures by republishing their writings in the Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology. Between 1841 and 1863 the works of 20 authors, from Andrewes and Beveridge to Overall and Thorndike, were printed under the new banner; another 33 were identified for inclusion in the series but their writings never went to press.⁸³

In a century characterised by partisanship, the writing of history was dominated by the traditionally enfranchised, educated clerisy still entrenched in the universities, a class in which proponents of evangelicalism were very much the minority. As Diarmaid McCulloch maintains, it was “the clericalist and Catholic tradition of Heylyn and Collier that...set the tone of historical writing on the English church in the nineteenth century”.⁸⁴ Their Church history minimised the Calvinism of the Reformation and largely elided sections of the eighteenth century and the evangelical revival. Little Gidding has long been incorporated into this Anglo-Catholic or High Church historiographical tradition. The process was underway when John Ferrar wrote his biography of Nicholas to serve the conformist cause, and when the non-jurors set about preserving its history. Though the non-jurors were officially excluded from the institutional Church in their own time, they were assimilated into the historical sequence that the Anglo-Catholics developed.

Modern interest in Little Gidding coincided with Anglo-Catholicism taking root in intellectual and literary circles and its considerable consolidation in the parishes of England.⁸⁵ The first histories of the Oxford Movement appeared in the early years of the twentieth century, and the centenary in 1933 of Keble’s Assize Sermon was greeted with a modest outpouring of apologetic publications, some of them claiming that the Tractarians had saved the Church of England.⁸⁶ In this climate, the saintly Nicholas Ferrar and his prayerful household in which the canonical hours were honoured were styled as important

⁸² Publications such as *Hierurgia Anglicana* exist as evidence of the mid-nineteenth century interest in the ritual culture of the early-modern Church of England and the continuation of this trend in the early twentieth century. Vernon Staley (ed. and rev.), *Hierurgia Anglicana: Documents and Extracts Illustrative of the Ceremonial of the Anglican Church after the Reformation*, 3 vols, new edn, London: De La More Press, 1902-5 (1848). For references to the Ferrars’ improvements to the Little Gidding church and liturgical textiles, see pp.47, 72. My thanks to Anne Laurence for supplying this reference.

⁸³ The Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1841-63. Many of these volumes are available online at the Project Canterbury website: <http://anglicanhistory.org/lact/index.html> (accessed April 9, 2007). Cf. the publications of the Parker Society, 1840-55, which by contrast sought to reprint and promote the thought of reformers of the Tudor Church.

⁸⁴ MacCulloch, “Myth of the English Reformation”, p.4.

⁸⁵ Nigel Yates calls the period from 1920 to 1950 the time of Anglo-Catholicism’s “triumph”. See his *Ritualism in Victorian Britain, 1839-1910*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp.350-60.

⁸⁶ Yates, *Ritualism*, pp.6-7.

devotional exempla for Anglicans and were marshalled by the High Church faction as precursors peculiar to their tradition.

In 1913 four Anglo-Catholic Cambridge college chaplains founded the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, “a Society of unmarried priests and laymen who live under a Rule which provides as large an element of common discipline as the work of the members permits”, taking Nicholas Ferrar as their patron.⁸⁷ The founders were on a retreat at Little Gidding in December 1912 when they drew up the provisions for their organisation, guided by Eric Milner-White, a don at King’s and a former parish priest who was studying Nicholas’s life.⁸⁸ In time the Oratory changed from offering pastoral service within the University to being a loose international association of ordained brethren, but the emphasis on prayer and celibacy remained firm.⁸⁹ A statue of Nicholas Ferrar from the Oratory House, an early base in Cambridge, was installed in a memorial chapel within the Church of the Good Shepherd at Arbury, Cambridge, where it stands today. A large parish on a new housing estate, the Good Shepherd was established and staffed by the Oratory. When the foundation stone was laid in 1957 the intention was to dedicate the church to Nicholas Ferrar, but at its consecration in 1964 it was dedicated instead to Christ the Good Shepherd and designated the official Nicholas Ferrar memorial church.⁹⁰ When the Society of the Friends of Little Gidding first met on 31 July 1946 at Jesus College, with the bishop of Ely, Edward Wynn, as chair, the attendees were all members and associates of the Oratory.⁹¹

The case of the misattribution of the manuscript of an early-modern Catholic book of meditations to a Ferrar relative, discovered in the possession of a Ferrar descendant around the turn of the twentieth century, further illustrates the willingness of some Anglo-Catholics to view Little Gidding’s spiritual ideals as consonant if not continuous with their own Catholic sympathies. The manuscript, meditations on the *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* (the sequence for Pentecost in the Mass), an unlikely subject for Protestant meditation, bore the initials “R.W.”, and thus was set to be published as an unknown Ferrar manuscript written

⁸⁷ Martin Davidson, “The Oratory of the Good Shepherd”, pamphlet, c.1962, Lambeth Palace Library, p.3. See also Henry T. Brandreth, *OGS: A History of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd*, Chatteris: Beaumont Press, 1958, including the Oratory’s hymn “In Praise of Nicholas Ferrar” by Bp John How, Appendix, p.32, and available online at Project Canterbury, <http://anglicanhistory.org/misc/ogs.html> (accessed April 2, 2007); George Tibbatts, *The Oratory of the Good Shepherd: The First Seventy-Five Years*, Windsor, Berks: The Almoner, OGS, 1988; and the OGS website: <http://www.ogs.net/> (accessed April 2, 2007).

⁸⁸ Brandreth, *OGS*, p.10.

⁸⁹ Tibbatts, *The Oratory*, p.v.

⁹⁰ Tibbatts, *The Oratory*, pp.33, 55; Brandreth, *OGS*, p.10, n.1. In the note Brandreth added: “There was perhaps a prophecy in the Official Court Circular the day after the foundation stone of this church had been laid by the Princess Margaret [i.e. 1 Aug 1957], when it referred to the ‘Church of *Saint* Nicholas Ferrar’.” See also the website of The Church of the Good Shepherd: <http://www.churchofthegoodshepherd.co.uk/> (accessed April 2, 2007).

⁹¹ Jillian Wilkinson, “Narrative of the history of the Friends of Little Gidding, 1946 – present day”, Little Gidding Church, <http://www.littlegiddingchurch.org.uk/lgchtmlfiles/lghist3.html> (accessed April 2, 2007).

by Ralph Woodnoth, who lived for some time at Little Gidding.⁹² Later, other copies of the manuscript were found, and its author was determined to be Richard White, a Catholic who studied at Douai and was ordained there in 1630, and served as a confessor to the English sisters at St Monica's in Louvain until his death in 1687.⁹³

Anglican scholarship suggests that the Communion identifies in its history a tension arising from the long-standing need to reconcile conflicting impulses within itself, for example the priorities of evangelicals with the opinions of those who favour liberal Scriptural interpretation. On examination, rather than living in perfect accord with a monolithic ethos at Little Gidding, similar inconsistencies, paradoxes and ambiguities are visible in the Ferrars' beliefs and practices. Further, many Anglican writers embrace the notion that the Church's life inheres in this "living tension", and that continued efforts to comprehend the divergent persuasions of its members and to forge a path between Roman Catholic and Reformed Protestant traditions represents not compromise but the active and challenging pursuit of the middle ground.⁹⁴ The Church also prides itself on privileging rationality. Coupled with the fact that history has a deeply established role as one of the Church's primary sources of identity, it thus seems appropriate that historical analysis should figure in its ongoing work of self-definition.⁹⁵ Continuing to contest the grounds and assumptions behind that process of identity-construction is arguably consistent with practices of debate that have shaped the Anglican confession since the early modern era, and stands to maintain the agreeable dynamism that buoys the Church.

Nicholas Ferrar and his family have been admired by co-religionists of many subsequent generations, despite the fact that little emulation is detectable amongst his contemporaries to suggest that his hope that their "Webb of freindshyp" would provide "a patterne In an adge that needs patternes" was fulfilled.⁹⁶ The historiographical representation of the Ferrars has lodged them in the Anglican firmament, as heroes and exemplars if not outright saints. Writing on figures of this kind is inclined to be indulgent or forgetful of their foibles, or to fit them into conventional improvement narratives: the transgressive life necessarily precedes the spiritual awakening, after which past sins are regretted and ultimately shed. Tropes and tendencies like these distort the historical record, which has been the result of the overwhelming influence of the *Life of Nicholas Ferrar* in

⁹² Richard White, *Celestial Fire: A Book of Meditations on the Veni, Sancte Spiritus, Written in the Seventeenth Century* by Richard White, re-ed. E.M. Green, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1913.

⁹³ Revd George Congreve, Preface to White, *Celestial Fire*, p.v.

⁹⁴ Paul Avis holds that this consensus is the post-factum accommodation of the historical demise or absence of doctrinal accord. "What is 'Anglicanism'?" in Sykes & Booty, *Study of Anglicanism*, pp.410-11. The term is H.R. McAdoo's, from his *The Spirit of Anglicanism* (London: Black, 1965), quoted by Avis, p.414.

⁹⁵ On the significance of history in Anglican tradition, see J.R.H. Moorman, *The Anglican Spiritual Tradition*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1983, pp.213-16.

⁹⁶ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 10 May 1630, FP, r4, 722[227], partly reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.255-56.

studies of the Ferrars. A balanced reading of Little Gidding, revealing such mundanities as marital discord and the clash of personalities, the brevity of the achievement, and the limitations of the focused contemplative life, need not prejudice acknowledgement of the Ferrars' godly aspiring.

Moreover, while the insistence on greater realism in religious biography amongst some seventeenth-century life-writers, from Clarke to Theophilus Gale and Theodosia Alleine, may add to the case for the credibility of John Ferrar's account of his brother's life, scrutiny and the amendment of the historical record is also consistent with the spirit of these Restoration authors.⁹⁷ W. Gerald Marshall argues that Walton and his contemporaries fashioned a new breed of English saints for the national Church after the Reformation, "normal" individuals with whom readers could identify, "able, on a day-to-day basis, to transform the mundane into the sacred, to sense the eternal just behind the minute, day, or observance", rather than a few extraordinarily devout persons.⁹⁸ Arguably, displaying some degree of fallibility also accords with this conception of everyday holiness, encouraging empathy and identification with the subjects of study, or even emulation. The present study proceeds in a similar vein, but it is independent from the pious tradition of Ferrar historiography. For while that tradition has helped to isolate and preserve some of the sources for the family's history, great scope remains for re-examining the Ferrars' lives at Little Gidding in their early seventeenth-century social context, based on documents from that time, rather than purely attending to their religious significance.

⁹⁷ Marshall, "Interpenetrations", pp.204-5.

⁹⁸ Marshall, "Interpenetrations", p.204. Marshall states that Walton invoked some hagiographical conventions in doing so and thus linked his subjects to that miraculous tradition, mainly to alert readers to the fact that the biographies they were reading "should be interpreted primarily as a saint's life." (p.205)

2 **Life at Little Gidding: household order and routine**

The supposedly distinctive holiness of the Ferrars has, since John Ferrar's *Life* of Nicholas, been located squarely in the domestic context of their rural home, the little commonwealth over which Nicholas exercised dominion. John incorporated a description of daily life at Little Gidding in the biography. Yet contemporaries of the Ferrars, such as Edward Lenton, the lawyer who visited Little Gidding in 1634, questioned the orthodoxy of the family's daily round, and by 1641 Lenton's observations were mobilised to slanderous effect in the pamphlet entitled *The Arminian Nunnery*. The Ferrars' religious orthodoxy and Lenton's comments are considered at length in chapter 3. It is likely that John Ferrar included the exposition of the Little Gidding routine in the *Life* to defend his family's reputation in the face of the suspicions of outsiders like Lenton, as well as to celebrate Nicholas's influence, and, as the previous chapter asserted, his sympathetic depiction of their habits has been accepted as definitive. Furthermore, this image has been reinforced because it is unchallenged: the description in the *Life* is the only surviving contemporary narrative account of the Ferrars' daily activities at Little Gidding.

In order to reassess understandings of life at Little Gidding, it is important to compare such evidence as can be gleaned from other sources, in particular from family correspondence, with John Ferrar's record. Accordingly, throughout this chapter findings from the *Life* are distinguished from information gathered elsewhere. From this basis, the Ferrars' everyday conduct can be measured against that of other early Stuart families of similar social status. This reveals the significant extent to which their lifestyle and priorities were commonplace at the time, and so supplies a revised perspective of their exceptional virtue. Studying the Little Gidding household also demonstrates how its members' experiences of living there differed owing to their social status, gender and age. Recognising this fact helps to develop impressions of the experiences of some of the individuals who are not prominent in histories based on the *Life*, such as the women and children of the family and to a lesser degree their servants, and challenges the notion that the Ferrar household was characterised by unanimity of mind and equality of status.

This chapter introduces the Ferrar family and examines the nature of everyday life at Little Gidding, addressing the practical organisation and functioning of the household in connection with the principles that informed its structure and routines. To orientate the study as a whole, attention is directed first towards the family background and the events of years prior to the Ferrars' move to Little Gidding, offering a sense of their social identity

and the roles and contexts that different family members left behind when they moved to Huntingdonshire in 1625. A brief discussion of the organisation of the household ensues, focusing on the distribution of power and responsibilities amongst its senior members, followed by a narrative account of the routines of worship, prayer, study and work through which the activities of their days were ordered. In the final section, the very worldly details of the Ferrars' financial circumstances and the ways they maintained their household are considered, the analysis providing a perspective that helps to balance the prevalent image of a community wholly devoted to spiritual matters.

Before Little Gidding: the Ferrar family background

Nicholas Ferrar sen. was born in Hertford in 1544 or 1545. His father was a draper there, who died when Nicholas was about twelve years old. As a young man of about twenty, Ferrar travelled to London and in 1564 commenced his apprenticeship with John Harby, a member of the Skinners' Company and a Merchant Adventurer. After ten years he was granted his freedom of the Skinners' Company, on 13 December 1574.¹

Initially Ferrar's earnings were based upon trading cloth through Hamburg, a major Hanseatic port which had been an important base for the distribution of Muscovy furs into western Europe. The decline of the fur trade from the late fifteenth century had forced the Skinners to diversify, and "skinner merchants" who dealt in other commodities became usual. As the most recent historian of the Skinners' Company states: "none of the most prominent Skinners in the middle of the sixteenth century were skinners by trade. ... [T]he livery was also largely composed of general merchants."² Following the declaration of war with Spain in 1585 Ferrar concentrated his efforts on privateering. He established a refinery in Mincing Lane off Fenchurch Street to process raw sugar seized from Spanish vessels on their return from the Caribbean. He made substantial profits and raised himself to a position of prominence in the Skinners' Company, serving as a warden in 1591, 1596, 1598 and 1601, and as Master in 1613-14.³ In the *Life*, John Ferrar described his father as "a merchant of good reputation in the city and, as they term it, an alderman's fellow or

¹ Details of the life of Nicholas Ferrar the elder (1544/5-1620) in this section are drawn from his will (dat. 23 Mar 1620, prob. 4 Apr 1620) and the work of D. R. Ransome, particularly the account in his "John Ferrar", and his Introduction to "The Parliamentary Papers of Nicholas Ferrar", pp.5-9. See also David R. Ransome, "Ferrar, John (c.1588-1657)" in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/60958> (accessed April 15, 2005); and Nicholas W. S. Cranfield, "Ferrar, Nicholas (1593-1637)" in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9356> (accessed April 15, 2005) (contains some factual errors).

² Anthony Holmes-Walker, *Sixes and Sevens: A Short History of the Skinners' Co.*, London: The Skinners' Co., 2005, pp.18-9.

³ Holmes-Walker, *Sixes and Sevens*, Appendix, p.79.

companion; a merchant adventurer, trading to the East and West Indies, Spain, Flanders, Germany, etc.”⁴ Amongst Nicholas sen.’s closest associates were Robert Bateman, the sometime Lord Mayor of London and substantial merchant, Sir Thomas Middleton, and his younger brother Sir Hugh, a goldsmith and leading light of the New River Company, both of them and co-investors in the sugar refinery.⁵

Well-accustomed to overseas trade and interested in commercial exploration, Ferrar was a founding member of the East India Company in 1599 and a decade later joined the Virginia Company (founded in 1606). The fledgling London joint-stock company, established for the exploration and settlement of territory in the New World and to develop industry and exports there, most famously tobacco, became his favourite enterprise. In addition to the house he had inherited in Hertford, Ferrar owned a substantial house in the centre of London, at St Sythe’s Lane, south of Cheapside. His son John claimed that his father’s acquaintance included such Elizabethan luminaries as “Sir John Hawkins, Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh, all gallant seamen, with whom he was an adventurer” and whom he entertained, alongside other “men of eminency” at his “good free table”.⁶ Ferrar’s house also served as the venue for council meetings of the Virginia Company from the beginning of Edwin Sandys’s treasurership in 1619. D.R. Ransome estimates he had assets in the region of £4000 at his death on 1 April 1620.⁷

John Ferrar addressed the Ferrar family background at the beginning of the biography of his brother Nicholas. Discussing their father’s life, in addition to establishing Nicholas Ferrar sen.’s mercantile credentials, John wanted readers know that Ferrar was “a gentleman by birth, of the family of the Ferrars of Yorkshire”.⁸ An extensive search of the various legal and testamentary records held in The National Archives indicates that there were Ferrars (of several variant spellings) living in Yorkshire during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but likewise there are Ferrars in a range of counties. D. R. Ransome states that the elder “Nicholas Ferrar’s ancestry cannot be traced back beyond his father with any certainty”, and it would seem most constructive to conceive of Ferrar as a self-made London entrepreneur whose experiences and priorities were congruent with his status as “a Tudor merchant par excellence” possessed of “unexpected [social] influence.”⁹

Like other successful families, the Ferrars took pride in claiming their connection

⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.41-2.

⁵ Charles Welch, “Myddelton, Sir Thomas (1549x56-1631)” rev. Trevor Dickie in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19685> (accessed April 15, 2005); Mark S. R. Jenner, “Myddelton, Sir Hugh, baronet (1556x60?-1631)” in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19683> (accessed April 15, 2005). See also Will of Nicholas Ferrar sen.

⁶ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p. 42. D.R. Ransome, “John Ferrar”, p.16 & “John Ferrar”, *ODNB*, 2004.

⁷ His will entails bequests of approximately £1500 in cash as well as goods and two houses.

⁸ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.41.

⁹ D.R. Ransome, “John Ferrar”, p.16; Muir & White, *Materials*, p.28.

with godliness as well as claiming ancient blood. Whilst it is feasible that Nicholas Ferrar's family did originate from Yorkshire, it is worth bearing in mind the purported blood relationship with the Marian martyr Robert Ferrar (*d.*1555) that John Ferrar tried to establish in the *Life*. Born in the parish of Halifax, Yorkshire, Robert Ferrar had begun his ecclesiastical career at the Augustinian priory of St Oswald in Nostell, Yorkshire, and later (after his ordination and several years at Cambridge and then Oxford) became its reformist prior. St Oswald's was made defunct at the Dissolution but Ferrar carried on as a minister of the Church of England and in 1548 was created bishop of St David's, marrying about that time.¹⁰ He was an ardent, vocal champion of the new religion who suffered a great deal under Edward VI before being executed under Mary by burning on 30 March 1555 in the market square at Carmarthen. He was a significant Protestant personage and hero of the Church with whom John wished readers of his brother's biography to link the Little Gidding Ferrars, pressing the analogy between Robert Ferrar's situation under the Catholic queen and their own at the hands of Cromwell's administration. He encouraged readers to associate Nicholas Ferrar with Robert Ferrar by claiming of his brother as a child: "The Book of Martyrs he took great delight in and the story of Bishop Ferrar he had perfect as for his name's sake."¹¹ Any line of descent, however, which the Yorkshire connection may have been intended to invoke, is obscure. To be sure, the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ferrars shared an affinity, but it was spiritual, confessional; there is no evidence that they were related.

By the end of 1578 Nicholas Ferrar sen. was married to Mary Woodnoth. The circumstances of their meeting and courtship are not known, but the couple lived for some time in the London parish of St Gabriel Fenchurch. Mary was born about 1554 into the "ancient" Cheshire gentry family of Woodnoth (or Wodenoth, Wodenote) whose estate was at Shavington. The alliance combined the economic clout of mercantile prosperity and the cachet of old blood. Together Nicholas and Mary had nine children. The register of St Gabriel Fenchurch records the baptisms of the first five: Mary in 1579, Susanna in 1582 (who was born in 1581), John in 1583, Joyce in 1584 and Erasmus in 1586. Later the family moved to Mark Lane in the parish of St Mary Staining, where they likely buried Mary, John, and Joyce, and christened four more sons: another John *c.*1588, William *c.*1590, Nicholas

¹⁰ For the life of Robert Ferrar, see Andrew J. Brown, *Robert Ferrar: Yorkshire monk, Reformation bishop, and martyr in Wales (c.1500-1550)*, London: Inscriptor Imprints, 1997, and Glanmor Williams, "Ferrar, Robert (*d.* 1555)" in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9357> (accessed March 20, 2007). For Foxe's martyrology of Robert Ferrar as per the 1583 edition, which contains the full set of documents first printed in 1563 and the description and an image of his death that were added in 1570 (p.1555): John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments [...] (1583 edition)*, [online], Sheffield: hriOnline, <http://www.hrionline.shef.ac.uk/foxe/> (accessed March 20, 2007), Part 5 ii, pp.1544-56.

¹¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.43. Muir and White also claim, on p.24, that given the Ferrars' familiarity with Foxe "it was not difficult for John to write a convincing narrative of his saintly sibling."

on 28 February 1593, and Richard c.1595. Susanna and five of her brothers survived to attain majority, but William and Erasmus both died as young men.¹² Susanna, the second John (the biographer), and Nicholas moved to Little Gidding with their mother in 1625, where they all lived out their days. Richard also survived, but remained in London, crippled by debts incurred at cards.

Little is known of Susanna's life before she married John Collet about the year 1600. The couple settled in Bourn, Cambridgeshire, and were parents to no less than 16 children, at least 14 of whom survived to young adulthood. There is no record of her education, but she was energetic and efficient insofar as she was involved in the management of the household at Little Gidding, and very attentive to her maternal duty of moral training and regulation. Records of her participation in sessions of the dialogue circle at Little Gidding, the Little Academy, show that she was familiar with such edifying literature as Nicholas set out for the gentlewomen's reading there and her letters show her proficiency as a writer. Her husband was the son of Thomas Collet, a London merchant, himself the eldest son of Humphrey Collet, a citizen and bowyer who had been MP for Southwark.¹³ John Collet was based in Bourn where he held land, including the lease of the parsonage, but he probably maintained some mercantile interests in the capital too.¹⁴

In common with many other gentle-born boys, Susanna's brothers commenced their formal education at a private school, run by an acquaintance of their parents, the Revd Robert Brooks, in Enborne near Newbury in Berkshire.¹⁵ John Ferrar listed history, arithmetic, logic, religion, Latin and Greek, writing, shorthand, oratory and singing amongst their studies, all of them conventional subjects in boys' curricula of the time.¹⁶ Erasmus, William and Nicholas proceeded to university as befitted gentlemen, whilst John and Richard were trained as merchants. Such a division in their sons' professional destinations represents the parents' engagement of a pragmatic strategy for the future maintenance of the family, directing them towards different types of employment that ought to prove socially respectable and financially rewarding. In the seventeenth century it was increasingly common for the sons of gentle families to enter trades, particularly for the younger sons who could not expect a substantial inheritance.¹⁷ It reflects the different social identities

¹² D.R. Ransome, "John Ferrar", p.17, and Introduction to "The Parliamentary Papers of Nicholas Ferrar, 1624", p.5. Cranfield gives them only five sons and two daughters, "Nicholas Ferrar", *ODNB* (2004).

¹³ Mayor, *Two Lives*, p.359. Will of Humphrey Collet, Bowyer of London, prob. 27 Jan 1567, Stonard Quire, PROB 11/49, PCC, TNA.

¹⁴ A series of undated letters between Susanna Collet and Mrs Frances Hagar record a dispute concerning the leasing of the Bourn parsonage lands, in which Mrs Hagar asks Mrs Collet to intercede with her husband to procure favourable terms of rent: CL, fos 39r-40r.

¹⁵ Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, p.259; J. & J.A.Venn, *Alum. Cantab.*, 1, II, p.134.

¹⁶ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.44. John refers to Nicholas's master of pricksong, which implies that he could read musical notation.

¹⁷ Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, pp.86-9, 257.

that the Ferrars (like an increasing number of families, particularly those whose fortunes were made in metropolitan centres) traversed: a university education was typical for gentlemen, whereas a practical apprenticeship provided suitable grounding for a successful business career.

Erasmus and William Ferrar were set on educational paths typical of many young gentlemen of the era. Erasmus went to Oxford before entering the Middle Temple on 20 March 1604, aged 18 (the age of admission to the Inns of Court was higher than that of the universities), and William was matriculated a pensioner at Clare Hall, Cambridge, in 1607, then moved to the Middle Temple at 20 years of age, on 10 May 1610. Erasmus died in 1609, at which time he had not been called to the bar, if indeed, as the heir, he had been expected to practise.¹⁸ Nearly a decade later, in 1618, William was called to the bar, but died in transit to Virginia or soon after arriving there in 1619.¹⁹

Nicholas Ferrar had been so advanced at school, wrote John in his biography, that his teacher, Dr Hammond, convinced his parents to send him up to Cambridge aged only 13.²⁰ Nicholas followed William to Clare in 1606, where he earned his BA in 1610 and proceeded Fellow the same year.²¹ In view of the contemporary average age of university admission, which Heal and Holmes estimate to have been around 15 years, Nicholas's beginning at the age of 13 was not especially early.²² Nor was John's claim regarding his brother's precocity unique. Biographies and family histories commonly redound with assertions of the exceptional character and capacities of protagonists. Gervase Holles, for example, writing the *Memorials* of his family, maintained that from childhood, John Holles, later first earl of Clare, "expressed an extraordinary towardlines, beyond most others his coetanians" and was thus extremely "well fitted for the University", despite not yet having turned 13 when he matriculated from Christ's College, Cambridge in 1579.²³ Just as Gervase Holles wrote that the master of Christ's had said of the young John Holles "This childe (if he lives) will prove a singular honour and ornament to this kingdome", John Ferrar recorded the fellows' glowing pronouncements about Nicholas. "His tutor Linsell [*sic.*]", wrote John,

¹⁸ Heal & Holmes point out that gentlemen who attended the Inns, in particular eldest sons, were by no means universally expected to pursue careers at law, *Gentry*, p.271.

¹⁹ D.R. Ransome, "John Ferrar", p.17. Muir and White give 1618 as the year of William's emigration, *Materials*, p.32. For admissions to the Middle Temple, see Introduction, n.22, p.12.

²⁰ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.44. Nicholas's age at admission to Clare is corroborated in Robert Byng's letter, p.45.

²¹ Venn, *Alum. Cantab.*, 1, II, p.134.

²² Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, p.270.

²³ Gervase Holles, *Memorials of the Holles Family 1493-1656*, ed. A.C. Wood, London: Camden Society, 3rd series, vol. 55, 1937 [1658], p.88. The precise date of John Holles's birth is unknown (see n.1, p.248). Likewise, John's second surviving son, Denzil, was not quite 13 when he went up to Christ's in June 1611.

would often say of him to the rest of the fellows: ‘God keep Nick in a right mind and way, for, if he should turn schismatic or heretic, he would make work for all the world, such a head, such an heart, such prevalent arguments he hath, and such a ready tongue and pen, such a memory; with that, indefatigable pains. For,’ said he, ‘I think he is made up of industry, that I know not who will be able to grapple with him.’²⁴

In contrast to his other sons’ scholarly training, Nicholas Ferrar sen. sent John and Richard straight from school to Hamburg, one of the ports to which he and his associates shipped their cloth. There John and Richard learned Low German to aid their foreign transactions, lodging and socialising with other English merchants while they developed an understanding of the other end of the export business. Such an arrangement was usual in the period; as Richard Grassby has shown, the senior members of these business-kin networks commonly remained in London as principals whilst the younger men, indeed often younger sons, were sent abroad to be factors.²⁵ John’s letter to his mother indicates he was in Hamburg in June 1612, and he returned there at least once after establishing himself in trade in London in 1613 (letters were addressed to him in Hamburg the following year).²⁶ Richard arrived in Hamburg in October 1614, aged about 19, as a letter he wrote aboard ship and posted on landing shows. Further letters written to his parents and sent from Hamburg survive, the latest of which dates from April 1617.²⁷

In Hamburg, John befriended Thomas Sheppard, a young Skinner and Merchant Adventurer.²⁸ Back in London and aged 25, John married Thomas’s sister, Anne, and ten days later on 26 February 1613 he was admitted to the Skinners’ Company by patrimony.²⁹ Soon afterwards he entered into partnership in business with his new brother-in-law, again a common phenomenon amongst merchant kin.³⁰ Anne died only five months after their wedding, and John erected a monument to her in their parish church, St Benet Sherehog.³¹ John’s first apprentice was Ferdinando Sheppard, Thomas and Anne’s younger brother,

²⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.99-100.

²⁵ See Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism*, pp.292-3, and “Love, Property and Kinship: The Courtship of Philip Williams, Levant Merchant, 1617-50”, *English Historical Review* (Apr 1998), p.340.

²⁶ John Ferrar to Mary Ferrar, 10 Jun 1612, FP, r1, 33[78]; Nicholas Ferrar sen. to John Ferrar, 11 Jun 1614, FP, r1, 49[119-21].

²⁷ For example: Richard Ferrar to John Ferrar & Nicholas Buckeridge, 21 Oct 1614, FP, r1, 53[130]; RF to Nicholas Ferrar sen., 17 Jun 1615, FP, r1, 64[153-4]; RF to Mary Ferrar, 17 Aug 1617, FP, r1, 78[196]; RF to Nicholas Ferrar sen., 29 Jun 1618, FP, r1, 87[223].

²⁸ D.R. Ransome, “John Ferrar”, p.17. In his will Nicholas Ferrar sen. bequeathed “unto my good frend Mr Thomas Shepheard my dyamond ringe.” It is not clear if this Shepheard was John’s business partner, but it is likely that he was a relative at least.

²⁹ A glimpse into the marriage arrangements is discernible in the Ferrar archive: Nicholas Ferrar sen. to William Sheppard, Jan 1612, FP, r1, 35[82].

³⁰ Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism*, pp.290-1.

³¹ Suggestions as to the location of the monument – in the parish church if John were likely to remain in St Sythe’s Lane – were made in a letter from his cousin John Woodnoth jun. 30 Dec 1613, FP, r1, 46[113-4].

contracted on 29 August 1614.³² A second apprentice, Thomas Bostock's son George, was indentured to him in December 1616 for a period of eight years.³³

As John Ferrar matured in business his overseas interests saw him join the Irish, East India and Somers Islands (Bermuda) Companies respectively in 1611, 1614 and 1615, and later, in 1619, he became a member of the New River Company.³⁴ His prosperity and his speculation grew, yet the Virginia Company remained his keenest concern. The eligible young widower remarried on St Valentine's Day, 1615, following the fashion set by the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Frederick, the Elector Palatine two years previously. His second wife, Bathsheba Owen, came from City stock. Her father, Israel Owen, was a Grocer, and her maternal grandfather was Alderman Richard Gourney.³⁵ The couple lived at Nicholas and Mary Ferrar's house in St Sythe's Lane, where Bathsheba gave birth to two children, named for their grandparents: first Mary, who died as an infant, then, in 1620, Nicholas.

Whilst John was starting out in marriage and enterprise in 1613, Nicholas was embarking for the Continent in the train of Elizabeth and Frederick following their Whitehall wedding.³⁶ John claimed that it was Dr Scot, the Master of Clare and the royal sub-almoner, had introduced Nicholas at court and a position was secured for him as an attendant to the royal couple.³⁷ Nicholas's 1610 BA was probably converted MA ahead of time so that he could depart England with the distinction. His physician William Butler had advised travel to warmer climes to combat the regular bouts of ague (perhaps malaria) that Nicholas had suffered throughout his life, aggravated, it was believed, by the damp and cold of Cambridge.³⁸

Despite the chance of earning preferment in the royal household at Heidelberg, Nicholas abandoned the party when they were leaving Amsterdam and set about five years'

³² D.R. Ransome, "John Ferrar", p.17. A deferential letter from Ferdinando to his brother Thomas survives, written from their parents' house at Great Rollright, Oxfordshire to the latter in Hamburg, asking him to come home and visit them. Ferdinando Sheppard to Thomas Sheppard, 16 Mar 1618, FP, r1, 83[212].

³³ Copy of Thomas Bostock's obligation on his son's apprenticeship, 20 Dec 1616, FP, r1, 69[168].

³⁴ Bermuda was originally under the auspices of the Virginia Company. After the Crown briefly seized control of it in 1614, the Virginia Company members formed the Somers Isles Company, in 1615, to administer Bermuda, which continued until its dissolution 1684. The official name of the islands was the Somers Isles, in honour of the Sir George Somers, the Admiral of the Virginia Company.

³⁵ D.R. Ransome, "John Ferrar", p.19.

³⁶ Nicholas's letter to his parents, composed shortly before he left, survives: Nicholas Ferrar to Nicholas Ferrar sen. & Mary Ferrar, 10 April 1613, FP, r1, 37[85], printed in Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.47-9.

³⁷ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.49.

³⁸ Muir and White suggest further that the trip was intended to alleviate stress induced by excessive study Muir & White, *Materials*, p.30. Their view relies on evidence from the *Life* alone. John Ferrar also reported that when Nicholas was studying at Leipzig, his German colleagues wrote to London praising his scholarship and obtained an assurance that Nicholas would not be rushed "so bade him not to be double diligent that he destroy himself." (p.51). William Butler (1535-1618) was a distinguished physician and a fellow of Clare. Thompson Cooper, "Butler, William (1535-1618)", rev. Sarah Bakewell in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4217> (accessed March 22, 2007).

independent travel in Europe, regarding which John's *Life* is almost the only source of information.³⁹ John wrote that Nicholas investigated the religious, political, industrial and linguistic traditions of diverse regions, and visited various courts in "upper Germany", supported somewhat by his father and brother's mercantile connections. These interests are 'civic' concerns, which were widely regarded to be the proper objects of attention for those young gentlemen who did undertake foreign travel in the early seventeenth century: sober considerations that were applicable to their governing status in England, as distinct from the cultural indulgences of later Grand Tourists.⁴⁰ Nicholas also spent protracted intervals at universities, first at Leipzig where he read German literature, government and law, then studying medicine at Padua, but never took his degree there because in the Catholic state its conferral was dependent upon the graduand swearing his allegiance to the papacy.

John Ferrar took care to intersperse assurances concerning Nicholas's fidelity to the Church of England during his period of exposure to other religious forms. In Amsterdam, Nicholas visited a synagogue and "the several houses of the Brownists, Anabaptists, etc., and confirmed himself in the truth."⁴¹ Later, Nicholas was descending from Germany into Venetian territory one Lent and was forced to spend it in quarantine on the border, during which time he meditated upon his experiences and said Psalms every hour, "[n]ever omitting his offices and preparations of devotion in all his travels, morning and evening and at midnight" having memorised the offices of the English Church. John alludes to a devotional rigour that was already well-established: "when he had not time or place to use his bodily posture he performed it the more fervently in his mind."⁴² The description of Nicholas's time in Catholic territory is generally imbued with a sense of its danger. When he visited Rome one Easter he went in secret, changing his lodging every night for ten days, because intelligence had spread before he arrived there that he was "a man of great designs". He was present at a papal blessing on Easter morning, but unwilling to kneel to receive it, a Swiss guard "crashed him down to the ground". He left quietly, but went to Loreto and across to Malta to see the Knights before he left Italy for Marseilles and thence shipped to Spain.⁴³

By 1617 Nicholas had reached Spain, from whence he would finally return to England. John represented his brother's summons home as a visionary episode. Nicholas

³⁹ Details of Nicholas's travels, are drawn from Ferrar, *Life*, in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.49-55. See also Joyce Ransome, "Prelude to Piety: Nicholas Ferrar's Grand Tour", *Seventeenth Century* 18:1 (2003), pp.1-24.

⁴⁰ On the changing attitude towards the utility and ends of Continental travel for the 'finishing' of young gentlemen across the seventeenth century, see Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, pp.274-5.

⁴¹ Ferrar, *Life*, in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.50.

⁴² Ferrar, *Life*, in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.51.

⁴³ Ferrar, *Life*, in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.53.

fell into a trance and heard (as he thought, nay he was certain of it) a voice saying to him: “Up and prepare homeward for thou shalt be my instrument to help and deliver two branches of thy family out of many troubles that they are and will be involved in and thou shalt be helper of them out of all.”⁴⁴

He set off, masquerading as an Italian mercenary on his way to fight for the Spanish cause in the war in Flanders so as not to appear English (Protestant) and thus to move more freely through the country. He sailed from San Sebastian to Dover then rode post to London. Bidden to remain in London near his ageing parents, the 24-year-old did not return to his “place of physicker” at Clare and allegedly declined the professorship in geometry at the recently established Gresham College too. Moved by familial duty, Nicholas joined John in the family business.⁴⁵

By the time of Nicholas’s return, the quarterly Court of the London Virginia Company as well as informal meetings of its members regularly took place at his father’s house in St Sythe’s Lane. Both John and Nicholas Ferrar grew to wield substantial influence in the organisation. At the peak of his career, in 1619, 31-year-old John was elected Deputy of the Company in 1619, second-in-charge to the new Treasurer, his friend Sir Edwin Sandys. Two years later John sat in Parliament as the Member for Tamworth in Staffordshire (though no record exists of his presence at the second session, at which the Commons passed the Protestation), his seat provided by Lord Paget, a member of the Virginia Company council.⁴⁶

Sandys’s and Ferrar’s elections represented wholesale change in the administration of the Virginia Company, which had been directed since its inception by the “Merchant Prince”, Sir Thomas Smythe (Smith, c.1558–1625).⁴⁷ Smythe’s son-in-law, Alderman Robert Johnson, was Deputy. Sandys, in turn, was appointed Deputy in 1617, when frustrations at the Company’s lack of profitability began to surface.⁴⁸ He and Ferrar had different priorities from Smythe in managing the business, and were profoundly dissatisfied with his standard of accounting and “such strange neglect and unorderlinesse in his government”.⁴⁹

The relationship of Sandys and Ferrar with the faction that formed around the

⁴⁴ Ferrar, *Life*, in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.54.

⁴⁵ John stated that it had been hoped that Nicholas would succeed Henry Briggs (*bap*.1561-1631) at Greasham, who had left to take up the new geometry professorship at Oxford. Briggs was a member of the Virginia Company and, so John claimed, believed Nicholas to be the better mathematician. Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.55-6.

⁴⁶ D.R. Ransome, Introduction to “The Parliamentary Papers of Nicholas Ferrar”, p.6.

⁴⁷ Among his many distinctions, Smythe was a freeman of the Skinners’ Co. like Nicholas Ferrar sen. and John. For his life and achievements, see Basil Morgan, “Smythe, Sir Thomas (c.1558–1625)” in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25908> (accessed March 21, 2007).

⁴⁸ D.R. Ransome, “John Ferrar”, p.19.

⁴⁹ Fragment of a speech in Committee of Inquiry by Lord Cavendish, 28 Apr 1624, FP, r3, 491[210-13] in D.R. Ransome, “The Parliamentary Papers of Nicholas Ferrar”, p.86. The fragment in the FP is misdated 16 July 1623, and is not the complete text which appears in “The Parliamentary Papers”.

original Treasurer, also a Skinner, grew acrimonious. Robert Rich, an avid privateer who had joined the Virginia Company's London council at the beginning of June in 1619, a few months after succeeding his father as the earl of Warwick, aligned himself with Smythe after quarrelling with Sandys, whose election he had originally endorsed. Sir Nathaniel Rich also enlisted in the cause of his kinsman Warwick; his political knowledge and proficiency at legal argument were later instrumental in pushing the Crown towards a verdict of no confidence in the government of the Virginia Company. The most influential peer in the Ferrar-Sandys bloc, by contrast, was Henry Wriothesley, earl of Southampton. Southampton replaced Sandys as Treasurer on 28 June 1620, remaining in the post until the Company's charter was revoked on 16 June 1624. He channelled substantial funds and energy into the Virginia enterprise and assisted his faction variously, including supplying a seat (Lymington, Hampshire) for Nicholas Ferrar in the parliament of 1624.

Since returning to London in 1617 Nicholas too had become entrenched in Virginia Company business. He was an important aide to his brother John during his Deputyship and succeeded him in the office in May 1622, in accordance with the three-year limit specified in the Company's charter.

Sandys and the Ferrars navigated difficult waters: James I's 1621 suspension of the lotteries that bankrolled the colony was crippling; news eventually reached London that in March 1622 the indigenous Powhatan people had killed over 300 English planters at Jamestown; and the Warwick faction was urging for the revision of the Company's charters, its efforts eventually resulting in a government audit of the Company and its records. As the Company faltered, John concentrated his ire on Gondomar (1567–1626), the Spanish ambassador.⁵⁰ John believed that the proximity by sea of the English settlement in North America and Spain's mines in South America was sufficiently threatening that Gondomar planted spies in the court sessions of the Virginia Company, and further, Gondomar had told King James that "the Virginia courts at the Ferrars [*sic*] would be a seminary for a seditious parliament" under Sandys and Southampton, which would prejudice relations between England and Spain "now that the Spanish match was going on."⁵¹ Nicholas's aversion to Gondomar is evident, too, in his notes from the discussions surrounding the collapse of the royal marital alliance in March, the first month of the 1624 parliament.⁵²

⁵⁰ Glyn Redworth, "Sarmiento de Acuña, Diego, count of Gondomar in the Spanish nobility (1567–1626)" in *ODNB*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, Oct 2006. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69257> (accessed March 25, 2007). Brennan Pursell, "James I, Gondomar and the dissolution of the parliament of 1621", *History* 85:279 (2000), pp.428-45.

⁵¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.57.

⁵² For Ferrar's notes concerning the Spanish Match from February and March 1624, see D.R. Ransome, "The Parliamentary Papers of Nicholas Ferrar, 1624", pp.24-55.

In April, Nicholas became embroiled in enmity with the Lord Treasurer Lionel Cranfield, earl of Middlesex, in the business of defending the Virginia Company against Cranfield's corrupt attempts to remove its patent "under the pretence that it should be and yield to the kind a greater revenues than it did, if it were ordered by his directions."⁵³ A parliamentary committee of inquiry into the Virginia Company was ordered as part of the king's efforts to discredit it and to nationalise the Virginian enterprise. In a committee session on the afternoon of 28 April 1624, Nicholas and fellow Virginia Company councillors Lord Cavendish, Sir John Danvers and Sir Edwin Sandys delivered speeches attacking Cranfield's dishonest actions, the Quarter Court of the Company having approved their doing so the same morning.⁵⁴ Cranfield was impeached. Soon afterwards, in May 1624, the Company lost the battle to retain control of the Virginia plantation when King James intervened and dissolved the Company by revocation of its charter.⁵⁵

At the same time as the Ferrars were facing the financial consequences of the Virginia Company collapse, John Ferrar found himself implicated in debts with his business partner Thomas Sheppard. The two had been in the practice of lending money together, John's mother Mary Ferrar being one of their clients, and when trouble arose they disputed exactly who owed money to whom. Referees were brought in to settle the matter, resulting in Sheppard's formal assurance "to secure J. Ferrar by Little Gidding if he shall appear on account indebted to him", dated 2 January 1624. The document notes that Ferrar and Sheppard, who had "been for divers yeares last past Coparteners in marchandisings and by reason thereof are become indebtors to divers persons in sundrie sommes of moneys", had "now lately agreed to finishe and profiite all accommpts betweene them", dissolving their partnership.⁵⁶ Later that year Sheppard was sued by one Thomas Barker, and John took pains to distance himself from the relevant transactions. In May 1624, the same month as the Virginia Company was finally liquidated, John wrote to the commissioners adjudicating the case with Barker in an attempt to limit his liability (before the limitation of liability was

⁵³ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.59. On Cranfield see Menna Prestwich, *Cranfield, Politics and Profits under the Early Stuarts: The Career of Lionel Cranfield Earl of Middlesex*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966, and R.H. Tawney, *Business and Politics under James I: Lionel Cranfield as merchant and minister*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958.

⁵⁴ D.R. Ransome, Introduction to "The Parliamentary Papers of Nicholas Ferrar", p.8; Nicholas Ferrar's speech in Committee, pp.71-82. Two copies of Ferrar's speech exist: one, very damaged at the bottom, in the Ferrar Papers (28 Apr 1624, FP, r3, 537[459-78]) and a second, intact, in Samuel Hartlib's papers at Sheffield University, Hartlib MS 61/2. A digital version of the Hartlib Papers is available: *The Hartlib papers: a complete text and image database of the papers of Samuel Hartlib (c.1600-1662) held in Sheffield University Library, Sheffield, England*, 2nd edn, Sheffield: hriOnline, University of Sheffield, 2002.

⁵⁵ Nicholas had the Virginia Co. secretary, Tristram Conyam, copy out "all the court books, registers, letters, [and] instructions" of the Co. so that they could be retained (he passed the records on to Southampton) when the originals were seized for auditing. Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.60.

⁵⁶ Assurance, Thomas Sheppard and John Ferrar, manor of Little Gidding and lands, 2 Jan 1624, E/6/12/13D/10 (see also mortgage and quitclaim of the same date, documents E/6/12/13D/9&11), Annesley MSS, Oxfordshire Record Office, Cowley, Oxford.

standard between business partners).⁵⁷ Sheppard supported John so far as to make a deposition on 14 May 1624 clearing him from involvement in the pertinent exchange of goods.⁵⁸

The extent of the debts was such, however, that affairs between John and Sheppard required further negotiation, at which point Nicholas became involved. By the middle of 1625, Nicholas had completed the purchase of the bankrupt estate of Little Gidding from Sheppard on behalf of his widowed mother, using £6000 of her dowry.⁵⁹ Arthur Woodnoth as well as John and Mary Ferrar were parties to various transactions in the deal. In general this narrative explaining how the family came to possess Little Gidding has been elided in histories of the Ferrars, or the process has been represented as being wholly orchestrated by Nicholas to make reparation for some of John's debts (in part owing to John's determination to record his own rescue by Nicholas⁶⁰). Considering the documents in the Ferrar archive rather than relying solely on the biography reveals a more convoluted state of pecuniary affairs.

An outbreak of plague in London in the spring of 1625 moved the Ferrars to evacuate to the countryside. John Ferrar wrote that his mother, Mary Ferrar, his wife Bathsheba and their five-year-old son Nicholas jun. went to stay with the Collets at Bourn near Cambridge, whilst he went to Little Gidding to prepare the dilapidated manor house there to receive family members and others fleeing the epidemic.⁶¹ By the beginning of summer, Mary Ferrar owned the property outright. The financial recovery was incomplete, and Nicholas stayed in town as long as he could, attending to business, before setting out for Little Gidding. That year all the family moved into the manor house, in response to Mrs Ferrar's request for them to "be all with her at Gidding".⁶²

John claimed that the "house was as good as ruined and unfit every way to be dwelt in", so workmen were employed to restore the "dispopulated ... little lordship", long used for farming.⁶³ "[M]uch cost and time was required to make it habitable for their family, which now consisted of" Mrs Ferrar, Nicholas, John and Bathsheba and their son Nicholas jun, John and Susanna Collet, who had brought most of their children with them

⁵⁷ John Ferrar's letter to the commissioners in the cause between Ferrar, Sheppard and Barker (copy), 15 May 1624, FP, r3, 541[488].

⁵⁸ Thomas Sheppard's affidavit in the Barker matter (draft, copy), 14 May 1624, FP, r3, 540[487].

⁵⁹ Bargain and sale, defeasance of statute staple, Manor of Little Gidding and lands, 30 May 1625, E/6/12/13D/12-13; declaration of trusts, 1 Jun 1625, E/6/12/13D/14; quitclaim, 4 Jun 1625, E/6/12/13D/15; Annesley MSS, Oxfordshire Record Office, Cowley, Oxford See also Ransome, "John Ferrar", p.21.

⁶⁰ For example: "He had settled all his brother's affairs at London and cleared John Ferrar out of all engagements." Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.64.

⁶¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.64.

⁶² Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.65.

⁶³ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.64.

from Bourn, including eight daughters, and several servants: perhaps not quite the “forty persons” that John recalled. He portrayed the preparation of the church for worship as the family’s utmost concern, for it had been “made a hay-barn and a hogsty and cattle kept in it”, and wrote that Mrs Ferrar was responsible for setting this priority. She refused to enter the house to rest when she first arrived before praying in the church and ordering for it to be cleared out. “‘Alas,’ said she, ‘yet I will not set my foot into my own house until I have made my prayer in God’s house.’”⁶⁴

John created a picture of Nicholas’s gradual creation of order from chaos at Little Gidding and his establishment of a routine that privileged religious observance. “Nicholas Ferrar began to bring things, both temporal and spiritual affairs, into a settled order as much as the then time and beginning of things would permit.”⁶⁵ The church was soon used for services, including recitation of the litany, which, in view of the plague, Nicholas had obtained permission to use every day. The family attended their own church three times a day, John wrote, which was made easier by the fact that the boundaries of their estate were coterminous with the parish. “And the loneliness of the place also gave them opportunity the more freely and quietly to serve God for they were the whole parish in their own house.” On Sunday mornings they visited Steeple Gidding church, the closest neighbouring parish, about half a mile away, to hear Luke Grosse, the minister there (though incumbent at Great Gidding), preach. On Sunday afternoons Grosse would come to preach in the church at Little Gidding. Mrs Ferrar made sure he was well remunerated for his pains.

As has been stated, the following spring some of the Ferrars returned to London a final time before quitting it forever in favour of Little Gidding. Friends, business contacts and their parish community in town may have remained, but their mercantile interests had all but dissolved and their financial position was severely impaired. Presumably there was little else left to keep them there. But there were some possessions still to retrieve and provisions for their country residence to procure and organise. Mrs Ferrar used the time in London to farewell all her friends, wrote John, “resolving for now (for well she liked Gidding) as to end her days there by the mercy of God and to lay her bones there. So ... she resolved within fourteen days after to return to her Gidding again and her whole family with her.”⁶⁶

During their short sojourn, Nicholas settled some matters of business and had the house at St Sythe’s Lane let, then reportedly passed the week leading up to Whitsunday in meditation. Privately, he approached his old Cambridge tutor, Augustine Lindsell, to

⁶⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.65.

⁶⁵ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.83.

⁶⁶ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.66.

discuss his intention to enter holy orders, and presently, on Trinity Sunday 1626, Nicholas was made deacon at Westminster Chapel by William Laud, then bishop of St David's. John claimed that Nicholas kept the decision secret in case friends (i.e. friends and relatives) should try to frustrate his plans. On returning from the chapel, he knelt before his mother and read her the vow he had written to God to the effect that

seeing God had so often heard his most humble petitions and had delivered him out of many most eminent dangers of soul and body and now had brought his family out of most desperate calamities, whereunto they might have fallen if his mercy had not been infinite, he should now set himself to serve him in such a calling, etc.⁶⁷

As news of Nicholas's ordination spread he was offered an array of lucrative livings and distinguished posts as private chaplain should he proceed to full orders, but he had decided "to step no higher in spiritual preferments and places than a deacon and to spend his life and time and talent in his own family".⁶⁸ They all returned to Little Gidding.

In different ways the move to Little Gidding was a great change of lifestyle for the householders. For a start, although many of them had lived under the same roof as family members who were not part of the same generation or marital unit, for example at St Sythe's Lane, and all were used to the presence of servants in their homes, there was no precedent for a composite household of relatives as large as the one at Little Gidding. The former city-dwellers shifted from life in London to near-complete rural isolation, in countryside with no familial associations for the Ferrar or Woodnoth lines, and to a reduced level of material comfort as a result of their financial losses. Mrs Ferrar was 71 when she moved to Huntingdonshire and had lived in London at least as long as she had been married, that is to say some 47 years. But, according to John's representation, she chose to stay at Little Gidding, whereas the majority of household members, including Bathsheba Ferrar and the adult Collet sisters, had no say in the matter. Certainly it can be argued that those who took the decisions for the family made choice of necessity – the cost of maintaining a suitable ménage in town was notoriously steep⁶⁹ – and they promulgated that notion within the household successfully, just as John's biographical project was to do beyond it.

For the Collets, it meant leaving their home in the country town where John Collet was established and moving a large number of children to another, more isolated, house in the country. Rather unusually, it was a return to the natal family of the wife, Susanna. John Collet was distanced from everyday business in Bourn (he kept his property there) by

⁶⁷ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.67.

⁶⁸ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.68.

⁶⁹ Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, pp.140-1.

which he had presumably supported his family and entered a household so arranged that he was stripped of the usual authority and status of the paterfamilias.

For Nicholas, the physical shift was accompanied by the change in spiritual status from layman to cleric, albeit one of minor orders, which had the potential to affect his position and authority within the family. It was a dramatic personal change in direction for a successful, well-educated and -travelled man accustomed to business and politics in the capital, and it was an extraordinary statement of commitment to his family of origin, especially for a single man. But at the same time his vocational choice deprived his relatives of the significant financial and social advantages that he, the most capable senior man, could have procured via a secular occupation.⁷⁰ Indeed, John and Nicholas Ferrar's parliamentary experience, their governing roles in the Virginia Company and connections with great men who had also invested in the enterprise, and Nicholas's familiarity with some figures at Court, all might have been preparation and precedent for their assuming civic responsibilities within their new county. Yet there is no evidence that either of them participated in local politics or assumed any provincial public office; nor did they engage in regional sociability or exchange hospitality with neighbouring grandees, as was usual.⁷¹ Even visits to well-situated friends such as the Sandyses were rare. It seems that they either did not, or could not, sustain the city connections that might have proved materially beneficial, and did not cultivate new alliances in Huntingdonshire.⁷² Given that country gentlemen were obliged to provide leadership and to model conduct within their communities, their decision not to participate is an outstanding as a deviation from gentry ideals.

Household hierarchy: gender, power and order at Little Gidding

Early modern English households were conventionally patriarchal, ideally headed by the most senior married man, with power distributed beneath him variously according to age, gender and marital status: older before younger, male before female, married before single. Some negotiation or exception was necessary in the case of the most usual outliers, widows and unmarried women. During the first ten years of its establishment, the Little Gidding

⁷⁰ On the relatively low income available to clergymen, see Rosemary O'Day, *The English Clergy: The Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession, 1558-1642*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979, p.127 and ch.13, pp.172-89. On the ambivalent attitudes and/or concern of gentry families towards careers in the Church (and also in trade), see Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, p.257.

⁷¹ Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, pp.282-3.

⁷² Heal and Holmes point out the opportunity for creating and maintaining connections that attendance at parliament by country gentlemen embodied, *Gentry*, p.205.

household incorporated an aged widow as well as a man and two women of marriageable age who remained single, all in positions of considerable authority. Old Mary Ferrar, as the Ferrar patriarch's widow, sat at the pinnacle of the hierarchy until her death in 1634. Her power was a symbol of proper order; as the benign family figurehead she issued blessings to supplicant offspring, and by her presence she reminded the family of her own role as the conduit of gentle Woodnoth blood into the Ferrar line, and of the ethical and dynastic value of motherhood, which was no small matter in a household oversupplied with nubile daughters. At the same time she embodied their connection to her (husband's) generation, thus obliquely keeping reverence for Nicholas Ferrar senior's contribution to their fortunes alive.

It was Mary Ferrar's unmarried son Nicholas who took charge of the governance of the household and to whom its members looked for direction. He designed the daily round of work and prayer and assumed overall financial control, his practical leadership in the household being at least as important as the spiritual distinction for which he is remembered. No record indicating an event or process marking the passage of authority from the widowed mother to her middle surviving son exists, but Nicholas's influence was welcomed from the time of his sought-after return to the parental household in London from Spain in 1617. The contribution of the very competent 24-year-old was all the more valuable then given his father's illness and the proximate death of William, the second-eldest of the four surviving Ferrar sons, aged around 28-29 years. Relatively soon afterwards, in 1620, Nicholas Ferrar sen. died too, leaving his heir, John, then in his early thirties, and his namesake, Nicholas, to take care of the family's business interests. At roughly 25 years of age, the youngest of the brothers, Richard, was already on the path to insolvency and ill-repute.

At Little Gidding, Nicholas involved the senior men and women of the family in decision-making. He readily delegated much of the task of household management to his sister Susanna Collet and her eldest daughters, Mary and Anna, a responsibility befitting their gender. Letters show Nicholas urged the younger women to relieve their grandmother, Mary Ferrar, and their mother Susanna of the burden of housekeeping, a respectful move that offered the older women respite and ensured that their daughters had the opportunity to practise the traditional feminine duty despite being unmarried.

Mary and Anna Collet both had very close relationships with their young uncle Nicholas, and Mary had a very influential position in the household. She effectively shared the leadership with Nicholas, although she never claimed or was recognised as having commensurate status, formally or otherwise, and she always maintained the posture of an inferior in their personal relationship. Several factors may have contributed to Mary's

empowerment: her celibacy; her maturity and seniority in age and birth order, being the eldest of the resident Collet offspring, and, as eldest sister, a carer for the younger children; her good and pious conduct; her connection to Nicholas. It is also possible that she was distinguished through having been raised by her grandparents. Her grandfather, Nicholas Ferrar sen., bequeathed £500 to “Marye Collett ... (whome I have broughte up from her Cradle)”, with £30 maintenance each year until she married or reached the age of 21 years and could thus inherit the full legacy.⁷³ Her grandmother Mary Ferrar promised her £500 too, in £50 annual increments, as opposed to the £50 she ordered John and Nicholas Ferrar “to add to the portion of my Grandchild Margarett Collett ... because I have soe longe brought hir upp and would have bestowed somethinge on hir out of myne owne estate but that I cannot.”⁷⁴ In consequence, Mary had independent means and lent or devoted much of her money to her family, a point to which discussion returns later in the chapter.

Judging by the available sources, John Ferrar and John Collet, the other two adult men in the Little Gidding household apart from Nicholas, had comparatively little influence in family politics, especially relative to Collet’s daughters Mary and Anna. John Ferrar was periodically engaged in business outside Little Gidding and presumably acted as the male head of the household when Nicholas was absent, but he seems to have been less involved with matters pertaining to family members other than issues specifically concerning his own children. His position was consistently inferior to that of his younger brother.

John Collet’s absence from many of the records of family affairs has been interpreted by historians as a sign of his fecklessness. The inference is uncharitable, though there is little evidence of what he spent his time doing and he appears mostly in the opening lines of his wife’s letters to their children, where she explains that she writes because their father is away or has given her leave to do so. The possibility that Susanna Collet’s prefatory statements were rhetorical devices should be borne in mind: a means of maintaining the conventional configuration by which parental authority rested first with the father but devolved quite naturally to his wife in appropriate instances, here enabling her to perform the maternal duty of composing exhortatory letters to her children. John Collet may have spent more time away from Little Gidding than the others if he remained directly involved with his affairs in Bourn. In any case, and perhaps because he did not carry the name Ferrar, he seems to have been quite marginal, and strangely so given he was the

⁷³ Will of Nicholas Ferrar sen. In comparison, he left only £20 to each of the other Collet children, and £100 to John Ferrar’s infant son Nicholas, his first Ferrar grandson and namesake.

⁷⁴ Will of Mary Ferrar, widow, dat. 29 Jul 1628, prob. 12 Jul 1634, Seager Quire Nos 65-144, PROB 11/166, PCC, TNA, some details reprinted in Mayor, *Two Lives*, pp.338-39.

father of most of Nicholas sen. and Mary Ferrar's grandchildren, including several tolerably successful sons who were engaged in professional practice or apprenticeship in London.

Bathsheba Ferrar's participation in family management is seldom noted. She receives scant mention in the correspondence and is referred to principally when her exasperated husband John writes to Nicholas for marital advice, and occasionally in other family letters when she seems to have been the maker of discord.⁷⁵ In previous accounts of Little Gidding Bathsheba has been represented as "the only shrilly dissonant member" of the extended family, dissatisfied with the isolated life of privation that she was forced to endure at Little Gidding and furious at her husband's consistent deference to his younger brother.⁷⁶ Whether she was truly obstinate, whether she suffered the disrespect of the majority of the others unjustly, or whether she has simply received short shrift at the hand of the Ferrar menfolk and historians, being excluded from responsibility was likely a slight to her. By way of comparison, Lettice (Bagot) Kynnersley's humiliation at being stripped of "the charge of the house" by her husband for not brewing sufficient beer is clear in a letter to her brother Walter, even though it was her husband who had prevented her acquiring the requisite malt.⁷⁷ Perhaps the exemption suited Bathsheba – and the others at Little Gidding. However, aside from her preoccupation with her small children, as the youngest mother and a less-than cherished second wife, Bathsheba's position as it is represented in the correspondence was comparatively humble. Yet the very fact that Bathsheba's husband, John Ferrar, wrote to his brother Nicholas objecting about her behaviour may indicate distress at her effective grasp of conjugal power, even if the only examples that survive of Bathsheba demonstrating her independence relate to instances when her behaviour was deemed disruptive. A refractory wife could threaten proper domestic order and could be a disquieting blight on adult manhood.⁷⁸

The fragility of John Ferrar's patriarchal masculinity within his marriage is most worthy of note, especially as he had already forfeited his rightful seniority in the family succession and in the Little Gidding household to his younger brother Nicholas (that is to say, employing Shepard's neat formulation, patriarchy in both feminist and early modern

⁷⁵ For evidence of marital discord between John and Bathsheba Ferrar see Nicholas Ferrar to John Ferrar, 26 Sep 1633, FP, r5, 910[429-30], reprinted in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.278-9; John Ferrar to Nicholas Ferrar, 22 Nov 1633, FP, r5, 915[442-30], reprinted in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.279-81.

⁷⁶ D.R. Ransome, "John Ferrar", p.21.

⁷⁷ L.a.598, Bagot Papers, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, cited in Rosemary O'Day, "Tudor and Stuart Women: their Lives through their Letters" in James Daybell (ed.), *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001, p.135.

⁷⁸ Recalling, also, that in early modern England it was understood that domestic disobedience was linked to disregard for authority in public contexts, such as that of officers of church and state. See for example Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England*, Oxford & New York: Blackwell, 1988, pp.34-66.

senses.⁷⁹) John had suffered financial misfortune, or had misgoverned his business, at the high-water mark of his public career as a man of affairs and provider for his wife and children. His younger brother had bailed him out, and at the same time was daily growing more prominent in the Virginia Company, in parliament, and as leader of the Ferrar family. John's loss of control and reliance upon his brother evolved into a pattern, not only of deference to Nicholas for his assistance, but of repeated recourse to him for advice on how to manage his marriage and his soul. Together these habits confirmed his displacement as family patriarch and household head at Little Gidding, though his failings were contained, and his inferiority sustained, via Nicholas's supervision and the seclusion of their lifestyle.⁸⁰ Nicholas, inferior in age and without experience of marriage, had nonetheless proven his manhood in the spheres of learning, business and politics, and furthermore he held moral and spiritual authority that was confirmed via his renunciation of the sites in which his masculine credentials had been established.

The dispute over their son John's breeching is an outstanding instance of John and Bathsheba Ferrar's marital difficulties. It illustrates not only Nicholas's involvement in their relationship and in a matter that was properly the business of the boy's parents, but also the antipathy that existed between Nicholas and Bathsheba. For gentle-born male children, breeching was a moment of ritualised significance in the gendered socialisation and identity-formation process of childhood. The boy's transition from the genderless garments of infancy to gender-specific clothing at around six years of age marked an important step towards manhood in the masculine lifecycle.⁸¹ As it was amongst the duties of the parents of a boy to administer his breeching, it was a situation where conflict could indicate a graver systemic problem.

On the morning of Saturday, 21 May 1636, Bathsheba went to Nicholas and explained her displeasure at his interference in regard to John jun.'s breeching. Nicholas did not answer her. Instead, as he noted at the top of the document, "I wrott the ensuing paper which I reade to her in her husbands presence and afterwards offered it to her but shee went away".⁸² Nicholas claimed that he did not remember speaking of putting her son into breeches, except once, casually, that week; that his brother John had told him he intended

⁷⁹ Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.70.

⁸⁰ John Ferrar was such a man as the writers of conduct literature would have "represented as doubly culpable, condemned for the forfeiture of their authority over others as well as over themselves." Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, p.73.

⁸¹ Linda Pollock (comp.), *A Lasting Relationship: Parents and Children over Three Centuries*, London: Fourth Estate, 1986, pp.81-2; Elizabeth Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage*, London & New York: Longman, 1999, p.39.

⁸² The information and quotations in this paragraph are derived from Nicholas's "paper": Nicholas Ferrar to Bathsheba Ferrar & to John Ferrar, 21 May 1636, FP, r5, 995[627-30] (N.B. misdated in Ransome's finding lists as 21 May 1635); printed in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.292-95.

to do it; and that he knew nothing more until John jun. had come up to him the previous day wearing breeches. He disavowed any knowledge of what had happened to the boy's coats, or having heard anything else from his brother to do with the breeching. Bathsheba clearly disagreed with her husband's decision to put John jun. into adult clothes. (The boy had recently turned six years old, in April 1636, whereas in the common seven-part schemata of the ages of man then current, infancy was agreed to extend to seven years of age.)⁸³ Nicholas wrote: "That you should have Intreated your husband to do the Contrary soe earnestly as you speake of I never dreamed". Had John asked him for advice on the matter, however, Nicholas would have told him he had better satisfy himself than satisfy Bathsheba, for to his mind she ought to be pleased with anything her husband did that was not "direct synn or great Inconveniency." Nicholas continued with a diatribe concerning wifely submission, studded with Scriptural references, declaring Bathsheba the Devil's captive and wrong in all her other complaints, and counselling her to obey her husband or risk her children's ruin. On his copy of the paper Nicholas noted that Bathsheba had interrupted his oration "with many undue speeches". Afterwards he wrote to John advising him to look to God for assistance because he would "fynd it is above mans will and ability" to protect himself and his children from the diabolical "Storme" of his wife.

As for the matter of the breeching, it seems plausible that Bathsheba was unhappy not only because she disagreed with her husband about it, because Nicholas was involved where he need not have been, and because the brothers were talking behind her back, but also because she was ashamed at John for being so unmanly as to confer with Nicholas at all on a simple matter of paternal prerogative. In addition to revealing the dearth of concord within their marriage and, through Nicholas's admonition of Bathsheba, John's general lack of control over his wife, then, in this case John had complicated and compromised his right to preside over his son's experience of a specifically masculine rite of passage.

The remaining members of the household were organised according to conventional notions of age, gender and social rank, an order best demonstrated in their regular procession to church, which is described later. The unmarried children of John and Susanna Collet, and John and Bathsheba Ferrar, were beholden to their elders, and for purposes of education and daily household work were divided according to gender. The most pertinent distinction was in their education: the boys, who were fewer in number, were schooled separately from the girls, and schoolmasters were employed to deliver their lessons, whereas the girls learned tasks appropriate to housewives from their sisters and

⁸³ See for example Shepard's table comparing several four-part and seven-part schemes of the ages of man, *Meanings of Manhood*, p.55, fig. 3.

mothers. In general the boys were sent to learn trades or continue their studies at university when they reached their teenage years.

Non-relatives do not appear very often in the family archive or in the *Life*, though John Ferrar implied that they were treated as family members who attended church and presumably dined with the Ferrars and Collets. The three schoolmasters had sleeping quarters near those of their charges, and the four or so poor widows the family supported were lodged in a dedicated “almshouse” within the building.⁸⁴

The lot of the servants at Little Gidding is, predictably, more difficult to recover. No register exists to indicate their names or their number, but their presence is recorded in John’s account of the Ferrars’ Sunday practices in the biography, and they are visible from time to time in incidental remarks in correspondence. For example, dispatching goods from London to his mother at Little Gidding in July 1626, Nicholas wrote that the Communion cup was “putt in Sarahs trunke”, and in a letter to Nicholas that September, Arthur Woodnoth referred to “your servant Elizabeth Scrubbine”.⁸⁵ In October 1632 Arthur reported to Nicholas that “your old servant Mabell” had disembarked from the ship, having returned from her own “country”.⁸⁶ Apparently she could not stay there because she had lost her friends (i.e. family), an affliction perhaps not unusual amongst those in service away from home, and was inquiring about working at Little Gidding once more.⁸⁷ In a letter the following week, Arthur mentioned that Mabell had been very helpful in caring for Nick Collet, who was then quite seriously ill in London, possibly in a bid to encourage Nicholas to employ her again.⁸⁸ He did: Mabell is counted as one of the householders in documents from 1636.⁸⁹ A third female servant is mentioned in a letter: Anne Boyse, the daughter of Daniel Boyse. Boyse was one of the booksellers in Cambridge whom Robert Mapletoft (Su Mapletoft’s brother-in-law and a friend of Nicholas) patronised. Anne did not like working at Little Gidding. In August 1635 Mapletoft wrote to Nicholas:

Daniel Boyse ... is very offended with his daughter Anne especially for leaving her place with you, wherefore her mother desired me to make proffer againe of her for use to her mistresse (as being the best meanes to reconcile her to her father) if she hath use of her, though upon meaner conditions and lesser wages. I told her my

⁸⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.87-8.

⁸⁵ Nicholas Ferrar to Mary Ferrar, 7 Jul 1626, FP, r3, 595[656]; Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 21 Sep 1626, FP, r3, 599[665].

⁸⁶ Given that county and country were interchangeable terms for domestic provinces, it is not clear whether Mabell had been elsewhere in England or overseas.

⁸⁷ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 16 Oct 1632, FP, r5, 869[52-4].

⁸⁸ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 23 Oct 1632, FP, r5, 874[63].

⁸⁹ For example, Nicholas Ferrar to his family at Little Gidding, 19 Jun 1636, FP, r5, 1022[703-6].

mind herin but yet she againe would needs trouble mee to trouble you with the motion.⁹⁰

John Ferrar recalled that on Sundays the servants went to church with the family at Little Gidding and special provision was made to minimise their kitchen duties.

And one other thing else besides it will not be amiss to be recounted concerning the servants: it was the custom of that family that, having a communion the first Sunday of each month throughout the year (besides the great festival times, Christmas, New Year's Day, Easter, and Whitsuntide), they stood at [the] lower end of the table where the old gentlewoman sat and there dined that day.⁹¹

The servants and psalm children stood at table, whereas the Ferrars sat, in spite of John's efforts to emphasize Nicholas's "special care that all in the family, high and low, children and servants" were treated equally on Sundays. John made it clear that the servants could join the family members in their prayer vigils if they elected to do so, stating "for you are to know that most of the maids could read and say psalms without book".⁹² This proof of the servants' literacy and its pious purpose were doubtless intended to reflect the magnanimity and prudence of their employers.

Demonstrations of unity in church and at holidays reflected good household government at least as much as they signified equality before God, and did not overcome the distinction between servants and served under the Ferrar roof. Respectability and rank were constant concerns throughout the family network, in which regard the Ferrars were entirely conventional. In a pathetic distress letter to his mother of September 1630, an exceedingly wretched Richard Ferrar, facing life as a "Newgate bird" having "unfortunately fallen Into the handes of a Credittor", still pleaded that no one should allow the servants to know about the ignominious state into which he had descended.⁹³ He aimed his supplication at his mother – "whether should I fly for sucor but to the wombe that bare me" – but begged for deliverance "for my deare fathers sake". Richard might have hoped to excite an emotional response in his mother by calling on his father's memory, or that she would be stirred to action by the threat to her husband's, and family's, honour. Either way, Richard's invocation of his father in this instance illustrates the force of patriarchy, even in the absence of the father himself. It was operative, moreover, in a manner by which no clear boundary was observed between internal and external spheres ("private" and "public") in which family reputation and rank might be established, demonstrating the fact

⁹⁰ Robert Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, 13 Aug 1635, FP, r5, 1003[646].

⁹¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.74.

⁹² Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.92.

⁹³ Richard Ferrar to Mary Ferrar, c.1 Sep 1630, FP, r4, 743[285-7], first part printed in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, p.278.

the these notions which were reified as much through self-perception and belief based on domestic practices as through external processes of construction or “fashioning” and social recognition.⁹⁴

“Punctual actions of each day in the week, and what was performed by the family in their course of life”⁹⁵: devotion, education, and charitable service

Little Gidding is esteemed a place of exceptional spirituality owing to the devout lives the Ferrar family led there during Nicholas’s lifetime. As has been stated, qualifying this conception by comparing their way of life with the habits of other early modern families is complicated by the existence of only one account of the daily routine at Little Gidding in John Ferrar’s *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*. Inevitably, the impression of day-to-day life at Little Gidding during the 1620s and 1630s developed in this section is based extensively on the *Life*, but it is the product of a critical reading of the text.

Nicholas Ferrar devised a pattern of living at Little Gidding to which communal religious observance was central. Each hour, on the hour, work and study were halted and members of the household gathered together for worship, the defining feature of days organised in a fashion reminiscent of the cycle of monastic hours. Nicholas’s determination that the family should heed the Pauline injunction to pray without ceasing issued in an exceptional expression of domestic piety, distinguished by its intense and structured nature rather than by innovation or idiosyncrasy of theology or forms of observance. The emphasis on liturgy at Little Gidding, exemplified in the dispensation obtained from the bishop of Lincoln to say the litany every day even after the plague had passed, did not displace the Biblical focus typical of godly Protestant households.⁹⁶ Each child’s education was founded upon learning extensive passages of Scripture by heart, in particular the Psalms. Following individual prayer upon waking, the first activity of the day involved the children gathering before Nicholas to recite in turn those texts most recently memorised.

The priority of liturgy, Scripture and prayer was matched by that of continuous works of practical piety, which comprehended bookbinding, prayer and study as well as dispensing food and basic medicine to the poor and ill of the neighbourhood. Mundane

⁹⁴ For a useful discussion of these much disputed categories in relation to domesticity and the household, see Erica Longfellow, “Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England,” *Journal of British Studies* 45 (Apr 2006), pp.313-34.

⁹⁵ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.69.

⁹⁶ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.83. Note also Alexandra Walsham’s argument regarding “propitiatory rituals” and varieties of corporate prayer such as those used during visitations of plague in early modern England, some of them designed for domestic practice, which “contradict the ingrained assumption that Protestantism was inherently unwelcoming to ritual forms.” *Providence in Early Modern England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p.149.

duties were done unto God so that the labour of keeping up the house and family was sanctified in harmony with the interludes of worship. George Herbert hymned such workaday devotion in his poem “The Elixir”, one of the verses that Nicholas brought to publication in *The Temple* in 1633, shortly after Herbert’s death: “A servant with this clause/ Makes drudgerie divine: / Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws, / Makes that and th’action fine.”⁹⁷ Without forcing a misrepresentative distinction between such practical activities and the religious principles that inform them, for the purposes of closer analysis the nature of the family’s beliefs and practices is treated in the next chapter, while the present discussion takes in their routine tasks and worldlier concerns.

The daily round and devotions

The family woke early, rising to the bell at four o’clock in summer and five in winter. The children and the Collet sisters readied themselves quickly and assembled in “a large great chamber fairly hung”. There Nicholas supervised the recitation from memory of the Psalms and Bible verses each had learned, as befitted their age and capacity, finishing around seven. Old Mrs Ferrar rose at five and came to the chamber where “about 20 of her family kneeled down and begged her blessing.”

On Sundays, the routine proceeded as follows. The family dispersed to put on their best clothes for church. Attendance at church was enjoined of everyone in the household, including the servants, and a policy of minimal physical work on the Sabbath was enforced. The bells rang around nine, at which signal the household gathered in the chamber and sang a hymn to the accompaniment of the organ. Excepting the servants, each said a sentence of Scripture, and then the whole proceeded to church in formation. First went the schoolmasters in gowns, followed by the boys, their pupils, in black gowns. Nicholas was next, then the Johns, Ferrar and Collet. After the men came Mrs Ferrar, then Susanna Collet “and her daughters and so all the servants, two by two.”⁹⁸ John Ferrar neglected to mention where his wife Bathsheba fitted. All made “low obeisance” on entering the church, before settling in their designated places. The seating in the small church was arranged like that in a collegiate chapel. The masters sat in chancel while the boys knelt on the upper steps ascending to it from the nave. The women were accommodated separately, the gendered division of space in church being a common feature of parish worship.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ George Herbert, *The Temple: Sacred poems and private ejaculations*, Cambridge: T. Buck & R. Daniel, 1633. John Wesley later modified some of the verses of “The Elixir” to create the well-known hymn “Teach me, my God and King”.

⁹⁸ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.70.

⁹⁹ Church seating reflected the ideal social order, so was also divided according to rank. See Margaret Aston, “Segregation in Church” in W.J Sheils & D. Wood (eds), *Studies in Church History Volume 27: Women in the Church*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp.237-394; Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, pp.137-44; and Amanda

They sat in the north aisle of the church, close behind the reading podium. Good order in all matters pertaining to worship in church was valued by a majority of Christian factions in early modern England. In his famous devotional manual *The Practise of Pietie*, the Revd Lewis Bayly (c.1575–1631), Puritan chaplain to Henry, Prince of Wales (d.1612) advised:

because that God is the God of order, he will have all things to be done in the church with one heart and accord (Acts ii.46) ... Pray, therefore, when the church prayeth, sing when they sing; and in the action of kneeling, standing, sitting, and such indifferent ceremonies (for the avoiding of scandal, the continuance of charity, and in testimony of thine obedience), conform thyself to the manner of the church wherein thou livest (Ezek. xlv.10; Psa. cx.3).¹⁰⁰

Nicholas stood at the podium in surplice and hood to read the service. Opposite the podium was a pulpit, reserved for the minister's use.

After the service they returned to the house, where Mary and Anna led the other elder Collet sisters in listening to the “psalm children” repeating the Psalms they had memorised in the past week. Nicholas had devised a scheme of “infusing into the memories of young children of the parish near adjoining (not doubting but God would do it also in their hearts) the Psalms of David,” reasoning that he thereby provided “so rich a jewel and so beneficial to them as the good of it was not to be expressed.” The children received a penny for each Psalm they could recite from memory, competing to earn the most, and were then served dinner, “money and meat being two so strong allurements to all kind of people.” John reported that the programme was very well subscribed (though it is not clear how many came), pleasing parents, children, and the local clergy, who “would, when they came to Gidding, tell Nicholas Ferrar what a happy piece of good was begun and what good effect it had already taken, and caused a great alteration in the towns amongst their young, nay elder sort.” Apparently Nicholas had ensured that “the sweet music of David's harp” permeated entire communities and wrought blessed change.¹⁰¹

The Ferrars not only sanctioned the payment of monetary incentives to encourage local children to learn the Scriptures, they also offered their own children a superior going rate to that granted their neighbours, according to a claim Dr Jebb added to his version of the biography, based on a discovery in a separate manuscript. The Ferrar-Collet children earned three pence for each Psalm and eight pence for each chapter of the New Testament

Flather, *Gender and Space in Early Modern England*, Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer for the Royal Historical Society, 2007, ch.5, pp.135-73.

¹⁰⁰ Lewis Bayly, *The Practise of Pietie directing a Christian how to walke that he may please God*, London: multiple edns from 1611, quoted in Rowell et al., *Love's Redeeming Work*, p.139.

¹⁰¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.71.

committed to memory.¹⁰² How they might have spent their rewards is open to speculation. The payments were possibly justified as a means of modelling remuneration for effort in worldly employment as much as in godly commitment, and perhaps the children were encouraged to save their earnings to practise prudent financial management.

Around half-past ten on Sundays the bell rang and the family returned to church, this time joined by the minister from Steeple Gidding, Luke Grosse, and his small congregation, most of whom were the Ferrar's tenants on the Little Gidding estate. They came to Little Gidding, having heard the first service at their own church. Nicholas read the second service from the communion table, a Psalm was sung, and then the minister preached. On the first Sunday of each month Grosse administered communion to the family, Nicholas having spent the preceding Saturday afternoon "in the catechizing the young people, in exhorting and informing the elder people, the instructing the servants all in their duties and to prepare themselves for that great feast of their souls."¹⁰³

After the sermon, the family, servants and visiting children repaired to the house for dinner. The psalm children stood silently at trestles to eat. Mrs Ferrar and Susanna Collet brought in the dishes as a sign of pious service of the children who were inferior to them in age and social station, and said grace before the children began to eat. The children were sent home after their meal, and at the sound of another bell the family gathered around the table in the dining room and sang a hymn with organ accompaniment. Next came grace, and then they sat to eat, Mrs Ferrar being served first. As they dined, a passage from the Bible was read aloud by one of the younger children. "Dinner ended, all had liberty to depart where they pleased, some to walk in garden, orchard, etc., and so to their closets and privacies."

At two o'clock the bell rang to summon the family together to walk to Steeple Gidding to hear another sermon. On returning they congregated in the great chamber to recite Psalms. During the week, groups were assigned to say set Psalms on the hour throughout the day, but on Sundays, given the schedule of other observances, the whole family recited the day's worth *en masse* in one afternoon session. Afterwards all took their leisure until supper time, about five o'clock in summer and six in winter. At the bell, they once more went into the parlour to the sound of the organ, sang a hymn while the food was brought in, and grace said, the meal began. Some little way into the meal, more reading by the children began. A Bible chapter came first, and then one who had already eaten went to the desk to read a story from Foxe's martyrology.

¹⁰² Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.73.

¹⁰³ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.69.

Supper done, grace said, in summer all again went where they pleased, walking abroad, and in winter warmed themselves if they pleased, a great fire being made in the room to heat it all over; those that would had candles and went away, and Nicholas Ferrar, his mother, and the elder people found some good discourse or other to pass the time with.¹⁰⁴

At eight o'clock the bell rang to final prayers in the great chamber, preceded by another hymn with accompanying organ. Mrs Ferrar conferred blessings on her suppliant family, then all went to their rooms, the young to sleep and the others enclosed in their chambers by order until they went to bed.

"Thus much for the Lord's Day; now come we to the weekdays' employment" wrote John.¹⁰⁵

Following their Scripture recitation and morning blessing from their grandmother, the family members returned to their apartments until six o'clock, when the bell called them together in the great chamber to say the first of the hourly Psalms. Each Psalm-saying observance also comprised the recounting of an episode from the gospels, the verses recited from memory by one of the company.¹⁰⁶ Afterwards came a hymn sung with organ accompaniment, then each in turn approached a reading table in the middle of the room, upon which lay copies of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer. Standing behind the large reading chair there, each read a different sentence of Scripture as they saw fit. Forming pairs, they proceeded next to church. Nicholas read the service to the well-ordered congregation, seated as on Sunday. At its conclusion they returned to the great chamber, where the appointed delegation "went to the great large compass window at upper end of the room, which window looked upon the church which stood and the end of the garden; and it being now seven o'clock," performed the second round of Psalms, Scripture reading and hymn singing for the day.¹⁰⁷

The boys and their schoolmasters breakfasted first then went to the schoolhouse (once a "fair dovehouse", now "dis pigeoned"), where they were joined by pupils drawn from towns nearby.¹⁰⁸ Others, amongst them the Collet sisters and the children too young for school, passed the morning in the great chamber, silently reading, or learning the texts they had to recite the next day, or embroidering. They were watched in their work by old

¹⁰⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.74.

¹⁰⁵ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.75.

¹⁰⁶ During the initial period, including the twelve months it took them to create a gospel concordance, the family "only said psalms and epistles and gospels." Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.76. Details of the Ferrars' Biblical concordances and their role in daily worship follow below.

¹⁰⁷ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.81.

¹⁰⁸ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.81-2. An account of the schooling at Little Gidding follows below.

Mrs Ferrar, who kept to her chair, “her constant place”. “[E]ach hour commonly had some employment or other for them: the making the concordances, their singing, their playing on their instruments, their writing, ciphering, and so never idle.”¹⁰⁹ “[A]s the clock struck that gave notice to all of time passing” each hour the designated parties would assemble for Psalms and devotions and then disperse again.¹¹⁰

All came together in the chamber and went to church to say the litany at ten o’clock daily. Dinner followed on the eleven o’clock devotions, with one of the younger daughters and four boys according to their turn reading from history as they ate.

And because the minds then being in most men altogether intent upon the refreshment of their bodies doth not willingly admit any serious speculation, it is thought fit that the reading shall be always of some easy and delightful matters, such as are history and relations of particular actions and persons, such as may not only furnish the mind with variety of knowledge in all kinds, but also stir up the affections to the embracement of virtue.¹¹¹

At the conclusion of the meal one of the boys told a short moral story from memory, compiled by Nicholas with edificatory intent, “and by this the young ones learned to speak gracefully and courageously.” Thirteen of these pithy tales survive in the library of Clare College, amongst the documents Francis Peck collected in the eighteenth century to write the history of Little Gidding.¹¹² Stories from the desert fathers appear to have been typical, such as “That we must do no Evil in Hopes it will not be known: from the Story of the Hermit & the Devil with his cloak & Drum”, alongside classical exemplars such as Cato and Augustus Caesar. The stories are much like simple, condensed versions of those told by the Collet sisters in their Little Academy, a characteristic educational circle at Little Gidding discussed in chapter 4 below. Free time ensued, then afternoon lessons, observances and tasks resumed as before at one o’clock.

The final daily church service took place at four. The evening meal was at five, with the same pattern of stories and readings as at midday. “This done, there was liberty to retire where each would: in summer time walking abroad, ... so some went to one thing, some to another to learn against next morning ... and the three masters had leave to go to their studies, or where they would.”¹¹³ In winter they clustered at the fireside and listened to another hour of readings while at their work, “to the intent that, by this means, all the

¹⁰⁹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.83.

¹¹⁰ “Besides in most of rooms of the house they had sundials of painted glass, and three dials on the church steeple, north, south, and west, all of them large and fairly painted in colours with suitable mottoes on them.” Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.83.

¹¹¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.83-4.

¹¹² Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.xiv, 8-9. Francis Peck, collection for the history of the nunnery of Little Gidding, MS Middle Hill 9527, Clare College, Cambridge. The thirteen stories are printed as “A Collection of Short Moral Histories” in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.203-21.

¹¹³ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.85.

family, of all ages and sexes, might not be ignorant of the days of old and things past in other ages and countries, as also of the present occurrences of their own times”.¹¹⁴ Evening prayers were in the great chamber at eight, where the children were blessed by their parents and grandmother, then all retired. During the night, those who wished to do so joined Nicholas in vigil prayers, described in the next chapter. “And thus in brief you have a relation of their manners and of their hours’ employment and daily exercises all the week long till Sunday again.”¹¹⁵

John wrote of a domestic routine that ran remarkably smoothly, its clockwork precision undisturbed by external intrusion or disobedience within. His account is generalised and represents an ideal week, rather than the record of an actual one. Readers of the *Life* should pay attention to the selectiveness of John’s picture of his family’s practices, which is likely the product of distorted recollection across nearly thirty years and of his conscious manipulation of their image.

Boys’ schooling

Three masters were hired to administer the boys’ education at Gidding: one to teach Latin; a second, handwriting and arithmetic; and a third how to play musical instruments – the virginals, viol and organ (Susanna Collet could teach them the lute). The curriculum was constructed around a book called “The Children’s Morning and Night Precepts”, long since lost, which Nicholas had written containing “fitting stories and lessons for the training up of young people, very pleasant for them to learn and profitable to practise.”¹¹⁶ The activities were allotted different times, the variety intended to make them more enjoyable, and two visits to church also punctuated the day’s lessons. Time was set aside for leisure on Thursday and Saturday afternoons, including regulated “pastimes and recreations with bows and arrows and butts set up for the performance, their runnings, leapings, vaultings, etc.” The boys and their schoolmasters were lodged in apartments close to Nicholas’s own so that he could “hear and see all their orderly deportments.”

Some of the boys received Nicholas’s special attention. Each morning after six-o’clock church, Nicholas took two of his nephews into his study: his namesake Nicholas Ferrar jun., his “dearly beloved nephew, in whom he took great joy for the blossoms of goodness and ingenuity that he discerned to sprout out daily in him,” the eldest son of John and Bathsheba Ferrar, and “another towardly youth, whose name was Ferrar Collet”, the youngest of Susanna and John Collet’s sons.¹¹⁷ Nicholas examined the boys for their

¹¹⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.85.

¹¹⁵ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.91.

¹¹⁶ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.70 (“the Children’s Prescripts”), 82, 114.

¹¹⁷ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.93.

interpretation of the Scripture read during the service. He took some time to write down his thoughts surrounding a particular verse they had just heard, and then read his commentary to the boys before dismissing them.¹¹⁸ Nicholas jun. and Ferrar were study companions, the former having an aptitude for languages such that he was composing a gospel concordance in twenty-four languages when he died aged only 21 in 1640.

Women's occupations: household management and charitable service

The girls and young women of Little Gidding had the benefit of the education entailed in the intensive household programme of reading and Scriptural studies, yet they were excluded from formal schooling. As it was envisaged they would one day proceed to the customary office of wife, household mistress and mother, they were trained instead in skills for domestic application. By way of practice, and because it relieved their own mother and grandmother from the task, John Ferrar reported that Nicholas charged the elder “four of his sister’s daughters capable of house government” with managing the entire household each in turn for a month at a time. Scrupulous written records of expenditure, income and servants’ orders were kept in a notebook, updated every night, and full accounts were expected at the end of the month. Though the women were sometimes parties to decision-making and other financial business, in general “giving orders for the managing of estates and affairs of the family” was up to Nicholas.¹¹⁹ Cows were kept, for proper bovine husbandry was “knowledge ... that belonged to housekeepers,” though perishables such as butter and cheese were obtained from their farming tenants at set rates, and they had “a butcher, a baker, etc. that served the house constantly with provisions”.¹²⁰ Nicholas had arranged it that way, wrote John, “for their better freedoms from too much worldly employments”. Still, knowing how to bake might serve the women well when God “dispose[d] of them in the world”, so the sisters made their own manchets.

They were also proficient with needles. The nature of the needlework that women performed in early modern England reflected their social status; plain-work was the province of the working woman, whilst embroidery was practised as a time-consuming accomplishment by gentle-born women. The Collet sisters would most likely have been trained in embroidery. Some of their work may have been figurative silk long-stitch like that which embellishes the exterior of a storage casket attributed to them, now in the Royal Collection, and there is at least one example of a velvet Bible cover worked with abstract floral designs by the Collet sisters, though usually the volumes they bound were decorated

¹¹⁸ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.91.

¹¹⁹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.88.

¹²⁰ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.86.

with gold tooling.¹²¹ Although clothes were altered and reused to make garments for other members of the family, there is no clear evidence that sewing of this kind was undertaken by Ferrar-Collet women as distinct from their servants.

“Practical charity was an acceptable public manifestation of the private virtue of piety” for the women of Little Gidding as it was for other godly Englishwomen.¹²² At least one of the older Collet sisters was normally to be found superintending the clinic or dispensary, “a room ... wherein were cured all such persons as daily came”, of which Mary had particular charge. Under the tutelage of their mother Susanna they learned to prepare treatments such as salves, oils, plasters, and sere cloths, stocking their “surgeon’s chest” and providing free care for their neighbours. Projecting an image of conventional respectability, John Ferrar claimed that the women were at first “both somewhat dainty and fearful to handle” the “very noisome sores and wounds” they encountered, until they became accustomed to the task with Nicholas’s encouragement and direction, based on what he had learnt studying medicine in Europe.¹²³ The sisters’ efforts were restricted by Nicholas’s beliefs concerning proper medical practice. He “wholly forbade them to meddle with [physic] ... an intolerable presumption in many persons that mean well” because he believed they lacked proper training and judgement and were therefore liable to do people injury. Proprietary defence of this professional masculine territory seems as likely a basis for his ban as care for prospective patients’ wellbeing. Nicholas also thought that “kitchen physic ... was a main thing for all poor people’s recovery of health” and that as such the generous preparation of “good broths” was the best service the sisters could perform in their regard.¹²⁴

Water gruel was distributed thrice weekly; “the poor housekeepers who dwelt in the towns round about Little Gidding came in the morning at six o’clock for it”, and more was sent to homes of the ailing poor.¹²⁵ In summer the poor were given milk. John gave no indication whether the family members were involved in the preparation of food as well as its distribution, or whether, like cooking for the gentry family, it was the servants’ task

¹²¹ On the mistaken association of “stump-work” embroidery and its invention with the Collet sisters, see Mrs [Ruth] Head, “English Secular Embroidery of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries”, *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 4:11 (1904), pp.168, 173. On the common misattribution of embroidered book-covers to the women of Little Gidding, and the existence of one volume of the Bible with Common Prayer (London, 1630) and Metrical Psalms (London, 1631) covered in embroidered red velvet that almost certainly *was* the work of the Collet sisters, see Cyril Davenport, “Embroidered Bindings of Bibles in the Possession of the British and Foreign Bible Society”, *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 4:12 (1904), pp.270-71. For analysis of the gendered significance of women’s embroidery work, see Patricia Crawford, “The only ornament in a woman: needlework in early modern England” in *All Her Labours: Volume 2, Embroidering the Framework*, Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1984, pp.7-20; Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, London: Women’s Press, 1984.

¹²² Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720*, London & New York: Routledge, 1993, p.88.

¹²³ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.87.

¹²⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.87.

¹²⁵ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.88.

alone. An almshouse was constructed at Mrs Ferrar's behest, lodging four poor widows who were incorporated into the household and participated in its customary observances. Their identities cannot be discerned from the Ferrar papers.

The women of Little Gidding shared with many female contemporaries the experience of days ordered by a strict timetable, with regular periods of devotion interspersed amongst more banal activities. The correct use of time held a position of utmost significance in prescriptive literature in early modern England (by the mid-seventeenth century, Jeremy Taylor would specify as "[t]he first general instrument of holy living, care of our time"¹²⁶), so it was not principally a monastic practice. The moral imperative was enjoined of women in particular, and the phenomenon of a woman's "daily round" has attracted the attention of many historians.¹²⁷ Constant remembrance of God was designed as a prophylactic measure against incidental sins, and a rigorous schedule admitted no time for dalliance and the indulgence of the natural carnality to which women were supposedly subject.

Concordances

A characteristic activity of the Little Gidding community was the construction of Biblical concordances or "harmonies", volumes which presented parallel accounts of particular episodes collated from the different books of Scripture.¹²⁸ Their first project, twelve months in the making, was a gospel concordance. Its pages were a collage of verses cut from printed copies of the evangelists' narratives, arranged and interspersed with illustrations and pasted on fresh paper before being pressed. Nicholas spent an hour each day "contriving" and "directing" the "new kind of printing", though the handiwork was performed by his nieces. At some point he also "entertained a bookbinder's daughter of Cambridge, to learn of her the skill and art of bookbinding and gilding, and grew very expert at it".¹²⁹ In the first instance this volume was used to facilitate the family's hourly observances; after the designated Psalm was said, one of them read a "head" or chapter of the concordance. John Ferrar wrote:

¹²⁶ Jeremy Taylor, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and of Holy Dying* [1650], rev. C.P. Eden, new edn, London: Longman, Green, et al., 1859, pp.9-16.

¹²⁷ See for example Anne Laurence, "Daniel's Practice: The Daily Round of Godly Women in Seventeenth-Century England" in R.N. Swanson (ed.), *Studies in Church History 37: The Use and Abuse of Time in Christian History*, Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2002, pp.173-83.

¹²⁸ On concordance-making, see J. Ransome, "Monotessaron", as before.

¹²⁹ Ferrar, *Life in Muir & White, Materials*, p.83. In the Appendix to the Victoria County History entry for Little Gidding it is stated that that the woman in question was "said to have been the daughter of Buck, the Cambridge University binder." "Appendix: Little Gidding", *A History of the County of Huntingdonshire: Volume 1* (1926), pp.399-406, n.15, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=38153> (accessed June 7, 2006). Thomas Buck, with Roger Daniel, was responsible for printing the first edition of Herbert's *Temple* in 1633.

the book contained one hundred and fifty heads or chapters and there were so allotted to each hour of the days so many heads as that, beginning still at the first day of each month and so ending at the last day of the month, all the heads was said over in every month's time, which was twelve times in the year.¹³⁰

Eventually the heads were delivered “without book”, an unsurprising fact given the multiple and ceaseless repetitions of the routine, the virtue of memorising Scripture being a favourite precept of Nicholas's and doubtless one of the objects of the exercise.¹³¹

The Collet sisters continued to produce concordances over the years, in the course of which they made gifts of several volumes. Charles I commanded sight of a concordance when he heard of their work, and, returning it with marginal notes in his own hand, ordered one for his personal use.¹³² A second commission from the king prompted them to designate “a long fair spacious room” in the house the “Concordance Chamber”, with “large tables round the sides of the walls” and “two very large and great presses”.¹³³ Apposite phrases adorned the upper part of the green-varnished walls; for instance: “Innocency is never better lodged than at the sign of Labour.”¹³⁴ Tessa Watt has written of the ubiquity of domestic wall-paintings in English dwellings of all social levels in the period 1575-1625, often including texts like these, as well as broadsides printed with Biblical scenes being put to similar exhortatory use on the walls of poorer peoples' houses. And Patricia Crawford has noted that “Lady Anne Clifford pinned up texts and sayings all around her room for general edification”.¹³⁵

George Herbert was the recipient of a gospel harmony, and John Ferrar claimed that, in his letter of thanks, Herbert had

humbly blessed God that he had lived now to see women's scissors brought to so rare a use as to serve at God's altar and encouraged them to proceed in the like works as the most happy employment of their times and to keep that book always, without book, in their hearts as well as they had it in their heads, memories and tongues.¹³⁶

Irrespective of the precise accuracy of the statement, a response of this nature from Herbert reflects conventional views with regard to gender, at the least suggesting the

¹³⁰ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.76

¹³¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.77, 107.

¹³² Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.77.

¹³³ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.79.

¹³⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.81.

¹³⁵ Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp.199-202, 221-3; Crawford, *Women and Religion*, p.88.

¹³⁶ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.76. On Herbert in connection with the Little Gidding concordances, see Paul Dyck, “‘So rare a use’: Scissors, Reading, and Devotion at Little Gidding”, *George Herbert Journal* 27:1&2 (Fall 2003/Spring 2004), pp.67-81.

general inapplicability of women's worldly capacities to important godly matters. A concern with the appropriate use of time, and thus implicitly the avoidance of idleness and the perils of their lustful nature, is also evident. It corresponds with the notion that women should be able to provide a reckoning of the proper traffic of their hours, a preoccupation of numerous early modern preachers and writers of conduct literature.¹³⁷ The sisters worked with the maxim "the industrious man hath no leisure to sin and the idle man hath no power to avoid sin" emblazoned above their heads.¹³⁸

The pains John took to explain that "the old gentlewoman herself became a handcraftswoman in the helping them with her own hands" suggests a conception that the highborn could acquire special merit by doing manual work which would be only normatively good if performed by working people.¹³⁹ Of course it is likely that John Ferrar's purpose in recounting Herbert's opinion was to flaunt the acclaim that his family met with from such a reverend personage, and to demonstrate the exceptional virtue of the women of Little Gidding, all of which referred back to the sanctifying influence of his brother Nicholas. Similarly, he chronicled the royal approval of the family's endeavours; said Charles "How happy a prince were I if there were many such virgins in my kingdom that would employ themselves as these do at Gidding."¹⁴⁰

Harmony-making was valued for its corporate nature; "uniting their heads and hands lovingly together," John knew that in the concordance room the unified ethos that Nicholas had envisaged for the family at Little Gidding was actualised. Although he did not record it in the *Life*, John saw that the concordances, or at least his daughters' book-binding skills, might have a financial value too, as is apparent from the previously-mentioned manufacturing efforts he supported after Nicholas's death. The process was costly, requiring significant infrastructure such as large presses, and a continual supply of paper, leather, glue, printed images and text from Bibles. Many of these items appear repeatedly in the Ferrars' correspondence, in the main text or jotted next to the direction in a list of goods accompanying a letter. It was one of the many expenses that had to be met in order to maintain the family.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Patricia Crawford cites this argument in relation to embroidery in Richard Brathwait, *The English gentlewoman* (London: B. Alsop and T. Fawcett, 1631) and John Taylor, *The needles excellency* (10th edn, London: printed for James Boler, 1634), for example. "The only ornament in a woman", pp.9-10.

¹³⁸ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.81.

¹³⁹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.77.

¹⁴⁰ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.79.

¹⁴¹ For example, Robert Mapletoft (Susanna Collet Mapletoft's brother-in-law), and Messrs John Ramsay and John Tabor were engaged in finding books from Cambridge booksellers for the Ferrars to use in concordance-making. John Ramsay to Nicholas Ferrar, 23 Sep 1634, FP, r5, 954[535]; Robert Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, 22 Aug 1634, FP, r5, 950[526] (enclosing a letter from Tabor, image 528).

“One purse and one mind”¹⁴²: finances and household economy

The narrative at the beginning of this chapter traced the background of the Ferrar family, and introduced their social and professional status and their financial circumstances immediately prior to the move to Little Gidding. However, John Ferrar represented the decision to relocate to the country estate as being spiritually-driven rather than dwelling on the fact that it was a response to entrepreneurial failure. The complex financial business of managing a gentry family and provisioning the household is all but absent from later accounts of the Ferrars that focus on religious matters. Yet material concerns are present in the *Life*, and further they are prevalent in correspondence and documents such as inventories and receipts in the family archive (which began as a business archive). In this final section it remains to consider the nature of the Ferrars’ assets and the measure and sources of their income, and to investigate their attitude towards and management of the material aspects of their existence.

As has been stated, Nicholas Ferrar sen. died on 1 April 1620, leaving a capital of around £4000. Ferrar and his wife Mary’s wills are the best means of assessing the nature and extent of their material assets, which were distributed amongst their relatives accordingly. John received the substantial London house at St Sythe’s Lane, which had served as the family home, the base for Nicholas Ferrar sen.’s business, and the venue for meetings of the Virginia Company court. Nicholas was given the house in Hertford, and some houses in Southwark from which they drew rent also remained in family hands.¹⁴³ Besides the Hertford house their father seems to have owned no country property. Whether this indicates, perhaps, Nicholas Ferrar sen.’s lack of interest in acquiring rural estates for profit or to provide an alternative, socially-prestigious home for his family, or a judicious concentration on their city presence, or a lack of funds, it is impossible to say. Indeed, the precise measure of his investment in the Virginia venture and in other businesses is elusive. Various bequests of rings, plate, and around £1200 cash were made, and the remainder of his wealth was divided into three parts: a third for his wife, Mary, upon whom he had previously settled an annual income of £200; a third shared between his sons Nicholas and Richard as forgiveness of their debts; and a third shared between all three surviving sons.¹⁴⁴ When they moved to Little Gidding, the family’s wealth had depleted through John’s financial difficulties and the losses consequent on the dissolution

¹⁴² John Ferrar to Theophilus Woodnoth, 30 Jan 1626, FP, r3, 587[640].

¹⁴³ It is not clear who held the leases of the Southwark properties, but at some point houses there were transferred to Joshua Mapletoft at a reduced rate. After he died, a deed signed by Nicholas and John Ferrar and Anna Collet was presented to Joshua’s brother, Robert Mapletoft, one of his executors (the other, unusually, was Mary Collet). Nicholas Ferrar to Robert Mapletoft, 2 Nov 1635, FP, r5, 1003[646].

¹⁴⁴ Ransome, “John Ferrar”, p.16. Will of Nicholas Ferrar sen.

of the Virginia Company, and it is possible they had to secure themselves by drawing on what the several beneficiaries had inherited from Nicholas Ferrar sen. They necessarily adapted to living by reduced means.

John and Nicholas were experienced managers of money from their work in the family business and in the Virginia Company, both having served as Deputy Treasurer of the latter during the early 1620s. But even before they arrived in Huntingdonshire, Nicholas controlled the family's finances. He was appointed executor of his father's will and confirmed his proficiency by relieving a significant proportion of the debt amassed surrounding the suppression of the Virginia Company and helping to rescue John (unfortunately, little evidence is available from which to construct an independent picture of John's career as a man of affairs in early seventeenth-century London).¹⁴⁵ When Nicholas became head of the household at Little Gidding, family members invested confidence in him to supply their material needs as much as their spiritual ones.

The Ferrars were not ruined in 1625, but moving to the provincial estate made sense in economic terms. The cost of maintaining a London household that met with the standard they had established in terms of size and degree of richness of lifestyle would likely have proved unmanageable.¹⁴⁶ The purchase of the mortgaged property from Thomas Sheppard using £6000 from Mary Ferrar's dowry has been described already. An extract from John Ferrar's letter to his cousin Theophilus Woodnoth, written at the beginning of 1626 when John and the family had been at Little Gidding for around six months, offers a perspective on how he interpreted the situation.

I have binne forced to pay above 5 Thousand pounds debte since Christmas was tow yeare which I stand surtity [i.e. surety] for without any assurance at all, but gods greate and infinite mersy hathe almost miraculously brought me forth of it by my mother buying of Littell Gidding in Huntingtonshire which stoude her upon the poynt of 6000 ll: and hither both shee and her whole family hath repared ever since the beginning of the last summer and I hope we shall so Continew together having but one purse and one mind as we are but one flesh and bloud...¹⁴⁷

John accounts his economic deliverance an instance of divine intervention, and shows that the discourse of family unity, typical of Ferrar statements concerning their life at Little Gidding, was applicable to financial matters, and so he trusted it would remain. John went on to call in Theophilus' debt, stating that the family was "very bare in this mony buissines". Given the damage to their trading interests wrought by a combination of losses,

¹⁴⁵ Richard Ferrar's receipt for £100 of his inheritance and Mary Collet's agreement to receive her bequest of £500 both list Nicholas as having issued the money. Receipt of Richard Ferrar, 1 Apr 1621, FP, r2, 236[48]; Mary Collet, agreement to receive money, 17 Jun 1625, FP, r3, 573[608].

¹⁴⁶ Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, pp.140-1.

¹⁴⁷ John Ferrar to Theophilus Woodnoth, 30 Jan 1626, FP, r3, 587[640].

potentially negative associations with the Virginia affair, and perhaps too a disreputability earned by John, Nicholas and other senior family members might well have considered it prudent to retreat from the humiliating glare of peer scrutiny and frustrated business prospects. They needed to save face as well as money.

Their withdrawal was not total, however. Nicholas dealt with business, including loans and investments, and tried to maintain the Ferrars' interests in London. The family no longer had an active businessman in the mercantile community there and their physical presence was diminished. Nicholas made regular trips to the capital and in doing so ensured that the Ferrars and their plight did not slip from the minds of former colleagues and friends in their absence. He made extensive use of his cousin, the goldsmith Arthur Woodnoth, as a metropolitan agent for the family, and usually stayed at Arthur's Foster Lane house when he was in town.

Nicholas oversaw the letting of the land comprising the estate of Little Gidding for farming, which, according to John, was done for the Ferrars' "better freedoms from too much worldly employments".¹⁴⁸ The income from the farmland was considerable: between £400 and £500 per year, which belonged to Mrs Ferrar, passing to Nicholas on her death in May 1634 and on to John when Nicholas died in late 1637.¹⁴⁹ Together with the annuity bequeathed Mary Ferrar by her husband, she enjoyed an annual income of £600 to £700. The monies were shared, which would have redoubled the respect that her relatives owed to the matriarch. Practical concerns were not neglected in the instalment of country tenants on their property; as mentioned, "a butcher, a baker, etc." lived there and supplied the Ferrars' house, and cheese and butter were purchased from other cottagers. The rents were an important source of regular income, and Nicholas exercised some generosity in setting the long term rates, despite his brother's initial objection, being both a reward and an incentive for loyalty.¹⁵⁰ As John represented him, Nicholas lived up to the benevolent model of paternalistic obligation that applied to gentlemen landholders at the time.¹⁵¹

Mrs Ferrar's importance in securing the financial situation of her children and their families raises the issue of the women's financial status at Little Gidding, both in terms of household management and their individual possession of assets. Whilst Nicholas supervised everyday household economics, the ongoing provisioning of the household was in the hands of the "four of his sister's daughters capable of it"; that is, Susanna Collet's four eldest daughters, most likely Mary, Susanna, before she left on marrying in 1628, Anna, Hester and Margaret. They took turns in charge of "the whole government of the

¹⁴⁸ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.86.

¹⁴⁹ Ransome, "John Ferrar", p.21.

¹⁵⁰ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.107-8.

¹⁵¹ Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, pp.102-4.

house in all that appertained unto it” for a month at a time, as noted previously, to “take off all worldly cares of house from both [Nicholas’s] aged mother and well beloved dear sister that now also grew in years”.¹⁵² Budgeting skills were necessary for any woman wishing to embark on married life in seventeenth-century England, certainly those of middling status or gentle birth. The Collet sisters’ duties were consistent with convention, so that, as has been shown, Mary and Anna performed normative roles in the Little Gidding household despite not marrying. During her month in control, each woman

kept the account of what was expended weekly in the house in a book of receipts and payments, so that there was not a penny laid out in the day-time but she entered all into her book before she went to bed. And at her going out of her place at month’s end, gave up a perfect account of all received and disbursed and drew every particular thing to its proper head, as the account of what beef was spent and what it cost that month in one page; the account of mutton in another page, yea, eggs, and, in sum, not one thing though never so small but had his page of account ... Whereby they became perfect accountants and book-keepers, not in any ordinary way but a pleasant and profitable way...¹⁵³

Nicholas apparently wished “that it might be to them a recreation rather than a burden”, indicating that his and/or John’s thinking was consistent with the general Protestant construction of women’s household work as a site for spiritually-satisfying service of God.¹⁵⁴ John made a point of reporting that the position did not entail any physical work; only account-keeping and seeing that the servants had daily instructions and carried out their tasks properly.

The young women did not invariably live up to the perfect standard of financial responsibility. Whereas John Ferrar did not mention such shortcomings, contemporary correspondence reveals, for example, that Anna Collet did not meet with her sister Mary’s model conduct. Anna wrote a contrite letter to Nicholas in June 1626, confessing that she had “without consent or knowledge expended on her selfe and others ye lost sune of the monys delivered unto her charge”.¹⁵⁵ Exactly what the money was for and how she arranged to spend it is unclear, for obtaining goods at Little Gidding generally meant writing to someone, typically Arthur Woodnoth in London, or else placing an order with Nicholas when he visited the city. There is no record of Anna undertaking any journeys that would have provided her with the opportunity to make purchases at this time, though it is possible that the sisters may have resorted to Susanna to supply their requirements when she married and went to live in Essex, or managed to pick things up themselves in

¹⁵² Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.86.

¹⁵³ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.86.

¹⁵⁴ Crawford, *Women and Religion*, p.85.

¹⁵⁵ Anna Collett to Nicholas Ferrar, 10 Jun 1626, FP, r3, 594[654].

the course of going there to visit. In all, the surviving documents give little indication of the personal effects of the Collet sisters or any other members of the family.

Mary Collet played an important role in family finances. Her case is notable in several ways and examining it gives insights into the expectations placed on this single woman living amongst her extended family. Even at an early stage Mary's responsibility was significant, such as when Nicholas left her in charge of the coffers while he was in London late in 1626 and the family was trying to allay financial difficulties and settle debts: "Heere with you shall receive a note from my Cosen Mary what monys are in the Chest what has binne paid out and what is to receive and to pay of those that you left when you went" wrote her uncle John Ferrar in a letter to Nicholas.¹⁵⁶ Mary was allotted a generous sum in her grandfather Nicholas Ferrar sen.'s will, which, presumably, would have made up her marriage portion had she not chosen to remain single. She had her own seal and used it to endorse transactions, such as the loan of £30 to Nicholas and her grandmother she made when she received her grandfather's endowment. Thus she enjoyed a degree of autonomy and empowerment with regard to her own money in the family group and, in potential if not in practice, outside of the family as a single woman (*feme sole*).

But obligation to the family had a financial dimension. Still troubled by "the streightness of [their] meanes" at the beginning of 1630, the Ferrars were working out how to raise over £700 in a short period of time to distribute between the numerous Collet children, who were all in need of marriage portions or their equivalent in the case of the boys. In a (now incomplete) letter to his brother John, Nicholas Ferrar proposed that Mary's "ten yeares Annuity in Expectation may bee converted into a present Rente chardge of twenty pounds [per] Annum [which] will bee as good to Mall in substance as fifty pounds for ten yeares".¹⁵⁷ Nicholas retained effective control of the monies promised to Mary. He knew that augmenting Mary's income would actually serve the family's interests, based on her record of generosity towards her relatives and her obligation to them, which was intensified given the communal ethos at Little Gidding and her reduced want of funds, having no immediate marriage to consider. Part of her money could be diverted to meet the pressing needs of the family. Nicholas felt he wagered safely on "Malls Vertuous disposition which I doubte not will make the Improvement of her Meanes turne to the increase of the Common good of our Family. As longe as shee lives with us shee shall allow it as she hath these twoe last yeares don for Far & Judith." Mary was providing for two of her youngest siblings, Ferrar and Judith Collet, who were 12 and six years old

¹⁵⁶ John Ferrar to Nicholas Ferrar, 21 Nov 1626, FP, r3, 602[674-5].

¹⁵⁷ Nicholas Ferrar to John Ferrar, 15 Jan 1630, with reply by John Ferrar and Mrs Ferrar, FP, r4, 699[170-71]. D.R. Ransome writes that Mary was granted her annuity in 1631, according to a document in Clare College, Cambridge, dated 13 May that year, *Ferrar Papers*, "Introduction/Finding List", p.iv.

respectively by the spring of 1631, revealing an economic dimension of the foster relationships that existed within the household and which were predominantly described using affective language.¹⁵⁸ It is consistent with the fact that fostering outside of natal homes in early modern England was commonly driven to a greater or lesser extent by material considerations, and reflects the financial aspect of Mary's upbringing in her grandfather's care.¹⁵⁹ Given a little more money, she could be expected to contribute further to the care of her kin. Mary's role in her family's finances is another aspect of the Ferrars' material life that is not evident in John's biography of Nicholas.

Such an expectation to pledge her resources to the family implied an investment which could, and perhaps did, preclude Mary's quitting its social and economic constraints. Her grandmother and uncles were willing to exploit her personal wealth such that any possible gain in terms of autonomy would be negated by the compulsion to sink the money back into the family. As in all cases of women loaning or donating money in the Ferrar family, the arrangements were made with due formality: John and Nicholas framed a proposal requiring the woman's consent, which was necessary given unmarried women in England, as *femes soles*, retained full possession of their property, including money.¹⁶⁰ It is not possible to know whether Mary objected to the plan or perceived in it any sort of misuse or manipulation, or, for that matter, whether Nicholas, John and Mrs Ferrar intended any. It is likely that conventions of duty governed the whole issue and that Mary took no exception to it; she may have enjoyed being able to specify that what was hers should be used for the benefit of her family. As an unmarried adult woman openly eschewing matrimony who had elected instead to remain at the heart of her natal family, conceiving of her role and interests as defined in relation to those of the rest of the householders was quite normal. The instance confirms the general case that early modern women's experiences of agency were, of course, negotiated within the parameters of socially-sanctioned values and behaviours, here shaped by the particular standards of the Ferrar family. Perhaps most importantly, it demonstrates a relationship between financial concerns and virtue and approval, what might be called 'affective economics', which has a gendered aspect, and in which obligation and will intersect, complicating the agency of the individual woman.

¹⁵⁸ The boy born between Ferrar and Judith, John Collet jun., was not included in his sister's care. Further comment concerning Mary's role as surrogate mother to her sister Susanna's children at Little Gidding follows in chapter 4 below.

¹⁵⁹ Grassby notes such fostering in merchant families, including the case of Nicholas Ferrar sen. and his granddaughter Mary Collet, *Kinship and Capitalism*, p.177.

¹⁶⁰ On women's property rights see Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, esp. pp.72-3; Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, London & New York: Routledge, 1993; Margaret Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early Modern Society*, London & New York: E. Arnold, 1995, esp. pp.97-105.

Mary Collet's case recalls the fact that material concerns and prudent familial economics were comprehended within early modern discourses of Christian virtue, and social propriety, and that this was true of the values at Little Gidding, despite the Ferrars' esteem for (apostolic) simplicity and renunciation. Further, it confirms that social and rank-related notions of what constituted, for example, good housewifery and the proper conduct of parents, were inseparable from the values promoted through Christian discourse or indeed presented as being essentially Christian, and should not be forgotten when categorical analysis is employed. It is congruous with John and Nicholas Ferrar's conviction that God had saved the family from insolvency, "Nicholas Ferrar composing a thanksgiving prayer afterwards at Gidding and ordering it to be the last day of every month said by the family for the deliverance of the family from ruin."¹⁶¹

The Christian approach to material resources entailed an obligation to use them for charitable ends, and it remains to discuss the Ferrars' commitment of money to charitable causes as an aspect of their financial management. Wills and documents in the Ferrar archive show that individual family members made bequests and Nicholas and John Ferrar made corporate donations on behalf of the whole family. Bequests to the poor are found in most of the surviving Ferrar wills.¹⁶² Although there is little sign that the Ferrars spent any time at Hertford when they were at Little Gidding or whilst they were living in London, Nicholas Ferrar sen. demonstrated his attachment to his birthplace by contributing to the poor of the Hertford parishes of St Andrew and All Saints while he was alive as well as in his will. His donations are recorded in itemised lists, demonstrating the merchant's careful management of his magnanimous acts.¹⁶³ He also left £300 towards "a college in Virginia for the conversion of infidels' children unto Christian religion", to be placed at the disposal of Edwin Sandys and his son John Ferrar (respectively the Treasurer and Deputy of the Virginia Company when the will was written) when the construction was completed and at least 10 children were being trained.¹⁶⁴ Until that time, he left an annual gift of £24, of which £8 each was to go to "any three several persons in Virginia of good life and fame, that undertake therewith to procure and bring up each of them one of the infidels' children, instructing them carefully in the grounds of the Christian religion." John recorded in Nicholas's biography that the two brothers "had given 2 shares of their lands in the

¹⁶¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.60. John added in brackets: "Query: shall the prayer be put in?" Muir and White have reproduced the lengthy prayer from Almack's manuscript (University of Cambridge Library, MS Additional 4484) in *Materials*, pp.60-64. John noted that in their monthly prayer sessions, the family followed this recitation by repeating all the Psalms of thanksgiving, "one saying one verse and all the rest saying together the next following."

¹⁶² Mary Ferrar is an exception, who spent much of her fortune on her descendants while she was alive, whilst her granddaughter Mary Collet was particularly generous towards the poor in her bequests.

¹⁶³ Lists of names of poor people receiving alms from Nicholas Ferrar sen. of London: All Saints, Hertford, 28 Mar 1619 & St Andrew, Hertford, 24 Apr 1619, FP, r1, 104-5[275-7] (see also 180[609-11]).

¹⁶⁴ Will of Nicholas Ferrar sen.

Summer Islands [Bermuda] for the maintenance of a free school in the Summer Islands as a charitable deed and sent psalm books for the children there to learn psalms, and testaments, etc.”¹⁶⁵ The Ferrars always understood the colonial project to have important Christian dimensions.

Collective resources were devoted to renovating the churches of St John the Divine at Little Gidding and St Andrew’s at Leighton Bromswold, and providing financial support for impoverished members of the extended family (as distinct from loans made to relatives and acquaintances). It is reasonable to assume that Nicholas governed the refurbishment of the house and church at Little Gidding, which must have involved significant outlay. At his mother’s request, he facilitated the restoration to the parish of glebe land long annexed to the manor.¹⁶⁶ He was instrumental in raising funds for the special rebuilding project at Leighton Bromswold, George Herbert’s benefice, by carefully targeted petitioning, too, whilst John arranged labour and materials and superintended the work.¹⁶⁷

In the *Life* John did not mention the money that the Ferrars spent on needy relatives. The two individuals who regularly requested aid, and often received it, were John Woodnoth and Richard Ferrar. John Woodnoth was Mrs Ferrar’s nephew and the lord of the Woodnoth estate at Shavington in Cheshire. For years he sent her letters describing his poverty, illness, and inability to feed his children, doubtless stricken by the same decline in fortunes that so many old gentle families of northern England experienced in the early modern period.¹⁶⁸ Charity within the family was seldom devoid of conflict. John Woodnoth was not always grateful for the measures of support he was offered; in spite of his destitution, he took offence at his brother Arthur’s proposal of meals and £20 a year in Sir John Danvers’ household, claiming that it was “the ordinary entertaynement & wages of a servingman of qualitie.” He wrote: “I thought my frends (pretending my preferment) would not have valued me at so lowe a rate”.¹⁶⁹ Extreme necessity did not extinguish his expectation of treatment and conditions appropriate to the head of a gentle family, particularly when dealing with his prosperous younger brother who kept shop in London.

¹⁶⁵ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.60

¹⁶⁶ Restoration of Little Gidding glebe and common, Sep 1632, FP, r5, 866[40-5]. It is notable that there was no incumbent in the tiny parish of Little Gidding during the Ferrars’ residence, which doubtless suited Nicholas in view of the family’s exceptional religious programme. Correspondence surrounding the transfer of the benefice, which was in the gift of the Lord Keeper, does exist, however: see David Stevens to Nicholas or John Ferrar, 12 Jun 1624, FP, r5, 942[510]; Silvester Adams to Nicholas or John Ferrar, 13 Jun 1634, FP, r5, 943[512].

¹⁶⁷ For details of the building work at Leighton Bromswold, see Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.93-4. John Ferrar also included one of Herbert’s letters concerning the renovations in the biography, pp.97-8.

¹⁶⁸ Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, p.14.

¹⁶⁹ John Woodnoth to Arthur Woodnoth, 2 Aug 1631, FP, r4, 803[458-61].

Richard Ferrar was the youngest of the Ferrar brothers, and his gambling often left him penniless.¹⁷⁰ His habitual dissipation earned the opprobrium of his relatives. More than once he was reduced to begging for specific items. In the winter of 1627, Nicholas wrote to George Sandys on Richard's behalf; as Richard's gaming debts intermittently led to his arrest, Nicholas was trying to arrange two months' amnesty for him in the liberties of the Savoy for the period surrounding his wife Elizabeth's lying-in. Elizabeth had secured lodgings in the Savoy for her accouchement because there were no suitable facilities where they lived.¹⁷¹ In these pathetic circumstances, Richard wrote to his mother, asking for an old pair of sheets for use in Elizabeth's delivery, and a Cheshire cheese for their meals.¹⁷² Perhaps he hoped the wholesome association of the food with Mary Ferrar's home county would work to his advantage. But she had limited patience for her prodigal son. In her will she gave her final word:

As for my sonne Richard I leave the care of him to my sonnes John and Nicholas which I hope in God shall never faile him bothe for myne and his deere fathers sakes[.] I cann give him nothinge because I doe not knowe whether there wilbe anie thing at all raised out of my estate att least for manie yeeres ... I maie not prejudice others deserts[.] I will leave him wholly to his Brothers loves which I knowe will better provide for him then I cann if he deserve.¹⁷³

After she died, his mother's attitude continued to inform the family's response to Richard. Nicholas managed his brother's case when the need arose, assisted by Arthur Woodnoth, as outlined in chapter 7, below.

Conclusion

Life at Little Gidding had unusual facets: the collection of several nuclear family units within one household, the Little Academy, the production of Biblical concordances, young women in monastical garments, isolation from county society and withdrawal from participation in local governance, and the sheer number of visits to church each week stand out in particular. But on the whole, the Ferrars' lifestyle conformed with mores and customs that were common amongst godly gentry families in early seventeenth century England. Perhaps the most important indication that Ferrars did not seek to overturn these

¹⁷⁰ See for example John Woodnoth to Mary Ferrar, 17 May 1633, FP, r5, 898[403-4]. She bequeathed to him (or some of his children) £10. Will of Mary Ferrar.

¹⁷¹ Nicholas Ferrar to George Sandys (draft), 3 Dec 1627, FP, r4, 628[21], reprinted in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.248-9.

¹⁷² Richard Ferrar to Mary Ferrar, 6 Dec 1627, FP, r4, 629[23].

¹⁷³ Will of Mary Ferrar.

standards is the effort they took to put normal structures in place where circumstances saw them lacking. For example, though family and household were in fact matriarchal, given the presence of the widowed Mrs Mary Ferrar, patriarchal order was achieved through Nicholas Ferrar's assumption of the role of household head, with his niece Mary Collet as his helpmeet, subordinate to him yet his partner in household government, in imitation of the marital bond. The rest of the family was organised in keeping with conventional gender order. Mrs Ferrar was revered by her family, but seems never to have exercised the power that she might have had in a manner similar to that of Joan, Lady Barrington, for instance.¹⁷⁴

John Ferrar represented his family as being solely driven by religion, a claim which the findings of this chapter have challenged. Nevertheless, the Ferrars did demonstrate religious commitment of an uncommon degree and intensity, and worked to apply Christian values to all aspects of their daily lives. They were not without peers; as Heal and Holmes point out, "[f]or the zealous godly, and indeed the powerfully committed Catholic, a man's life should be lived wholly in the knowledge and fear of the Lord, and hence in pursuit of his purposes."¹⁷⁵ But instead of taking up the cause of religion in action during the Charles I's personal rule, the Ferrars sought holiness in contemplation. Their commitment was not radical, but to the national Church, and their example touched outsiders, such as the men of Cambridge and the capital, not by outreach but by reputation. Yet the Ferrars' religious practices were the source of much interest and speculation in their own time, and their religiosity has attracted attention to them ever since, so that John's account has not seemed discordant. For these reasons, religion at Little Gidding is the subject of the next chapter.

¹⁷⁴ See Arthur Searle, *Barrington Family Letters 1628-1632*, London: Royal Historical Society, 1983.

¹⁷⁵ Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, p.373.

3 “The Way of Little Gidding”¹: religious beliefs and practices

Today Little Gidding is a religious site: a place of organised and informal pilgrimage, and a spiritual retreat, “where prayer has been valid.”² The historiography dedicated to it is a product of veneration for and curiosity surrounding the life of Christian devotion that Nicholas Ferrar and the family members who lived with him there pursued in the early seventeenth century. It is their godliness which is remembered about the Ferrars. It is not surprising that the focus on their conspicuous piety has meant that historical studies of the family have neglected other aspects of their lives and have tended to dwell upon Nicholas and his holiness. Points of historical interpretation and supposition about the family have grown more solid with each reiteration of the narrative, ossified by the repetitive, biographical approach writers have adopted since John Ferrar first committed his version of Nicholas’s life to the page, and by the reverent, even hagiographical nature of their inquiries. Ways of thinking about Little Gidding have become fixed.

Yet in fact, relatively little attention has been paid to the detail of the Ferrars’ beliefs and the practice of their faith, particularly in the context of the religious climate of early Stuart England. As the survey of previous writing in chapter 1 demonstrates, authorial convictions, together with the position and practices of the Church of England and understandings of its history that were current when they wrote, have affected representations of Little Gidding and the nature of the Ferrars’ religious observance. Whilst a central objective of this thesis is to investigate the family beyond the constraints, conscious and otherwise, of perspectives which privilege devotional matters or artificially isolate religion from more worldly aspects of life, it is nevertheless necessary to address religion at Little Gidding, and to assess it in relation to religion in seventeenth-century England.

The present chapter sets aside the tacit assumption that the family’s retreat from the world realized a long-held intention of Nicholas’s and ran according to a carefully-conceived plan, an impression that much of the foregoing historiography has sustained. And in addition to John Ferrar’s depiction of a household united in common belief and living in agreement with the routine Nicholas had prescribed, it draws on evidence gathered from a variety of other documents. It investigates the religious beliefs and practices of the

¹ Elsie Kathleen Seth-Smith used this phrase as the title of her novel: *The Way of Little Gidding* (1914). Cf. Robert van de Weyer, *The Little Gidding Way* (1988).

² T.S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*, London: Faber and Faber, 1942, l.48, p.8.

Ferrar family anew, first offering an account of the kind of Christianity they was practised at Little Gidding, with reference to national Protestant orthodoxy and the particular school of Arminian thought at Cambridge with which Nicholas Ferrar was acquainted. Discussion follows on the three aspects of the family's Christian observance that were most unusual and indeed most controversial in their time: contemplative religion, religious asceticism, and celibacy. Then it attends briefly to negative contemporary responses of outsiders to the Ferrars' religious life, to the grounds upon which the family feared criticism, and the ways in which they mounted a defence. Finally some concluding remarks touch on the distinctiveness of the Ferrars amongst their contemporaries in matters of religion.

The nature of devotion at Little Gidding

Anglican histories of Little Gidding celebrate the Ferrar community because of what it purportedly was; that is to say, it has been interpreted as being the embodiment of a series of ideals which have been central to Anglican self-identification.³ According to these texts, Little Gidding embodies the ideal of the Church of England as a middle path or "third way" between Roman Catholicism and Reformed Protestantism, and is located in the Church's early seventeenth-century "golden age", when its core values were worked out through experiments in practice and theory, typically taking the lead from earnest and honourable clergymen. Little Gidding is held up as an example of laypeople's successful application of the relatively young Church's precepts and devotional apparatus in their everyday lives. The Ferrars themselves are a model pious family, the household-head Nicholas being holy and venerable and his relatives worthy of emulation. They are represented as exceptional in their religious dedication, notwithstanding the everyday circumstances and humble texture of their achievement. Their significance is in fact strengthened by its paradoxical construction, their domestic religion at once a normative paradigm, noted because of its commonplace nature, and somehow removed, distinguished by Nicholas's near-sanctifying presence, and in the end not quite attainable by other lay families. In this image, the Ferrars are very Christ-like: humble and human, yet suffused by the supernatural.

In the context of early Stuart England, the family sits comfortably between the excesses of the Caroline sanctuaries at court and in Laud's gorgeous churches, and the rigid

³ Remembering that this tradition of representation is founded upon the picture of themselves that the Ferrars left, or more accurately the particular history that John Ferrar created in his *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*, and the associated impression that Oley planted in the preface to Herbert's *Country Parson*, and so on.

Calvinism associated with “Puritanism”, nonconformity and regicide. The gentry-mercantile family was distant in socio-economic terms from the obscure, the low-born and the impoverished, but practised charity; family-members rubbed shoulders with their “betters”, aristocrats and luxuriant entrepreneurs, without absorbing their corruption. In politics they were moderate: loyal to the Crown, supporters of parliamentary consultation in government, John and Nicholas Ferrar taking public office as MPs and the latter demonstrating readiness to challenge corrupt royal appointees (Cranfield), and mindful of civic duty in City enterprise and their plans for overseas colonies. According to the historical record then, in all things the Ferrars maintained a blessed mean, and by implication were thus thoroughly Anglican in their conduct of life.

The purpose of this section is to question the dominant impression of the Ferrars’ religion that has been sustained through the conventional historiography. Granted their basic assent to the framework and tenets of the early seventeenth-century Church of England – their conformity – what kind of Christianity did the Ferrars practise at Little Gidding? How do their beliefs and practices measure up in relation to those of their contemporaries?

The routine by which the Ferrars’ lives were ordered, including their collective devotions and church-going, was described in chapter 2. It was wholly informed by Christian principles, such that even the most mundane tasks were performed with religious intent, with the object of eliding any distinction between sacred and profane activities. Insofar as that was the case, their aspiration was in harmony with the Lutheran ideal of sanctifying the everyday, familiar throughout reformed Europe.⁴ However, there is more to be said regarding the nature of religion at Little Gidding.

Amongst their conventional religious practices, the Ferrars performed good works and made charitable bequests, including those that served the cause of propagating Christianity in the New World, as outlined in the previous chapter. On a daily basis, they dispensed food and basic medical care to the people who lived in the vicinity, and four poor widows were incorporated permanently into their household. There is no evidence that the Ferrar-Collet women visited the local poor to offer food or other assistance, as may be expected of members of a gentry family; most likely, the value placed on the Ferrars’ seclusion of life meant they instituted an on-site “soup kitchen” so the women did not have to leave the house, or else no records of the common obligation of visiting were made or have survived. The extant wills of family members (Mary Collet, Mary Ferrar,

⁴ The notion proceeds from Luther’s doctrine of *vocatio*, by which God works through and in cooperation with the individual human in the performance of the daily tasks of their occupation. An authoritative account is given by Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957.

Nicholas Ferrar sen., Joshua Mapletoft, Arthur Woodnoth) record a variety of unremarkable gifts of money to churches, the local poor, widows, and family members in need. Although ministers' widows were not unfrequently remembered in wills at the time, Mary Collet's designation of four clerics' widows as beneficiaries of her will to the value of £5, in addition to the poor and family members, may reflect the experience of caring for the widows at Little Gidding, the influence of her grandmother, the fact that all her sisters who survived beyond their thirties were clergy wives, and her own situation as an aged singlewoman (she lived nearly 80 years, and died in London in November 1680).⁵

Maintaining orthodoxy was a matter of considerable importance for Nicholas. If explicit references to fundamental texts of the Church of England (the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, and Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* for example) are less frequent or visible than might be imagined in the family's documentary remains, it is presumably because of their sheer familiarity and unquestioned role as the basis of their faith. Instilling knowledge of Psalms and Scripture in the hearts of the local children was agreeable to their parents, who requested that Nicholas should also provide their catechesis. He refused, affirming the Church's teaching it was the duty of parents, godparents and the minister to do so, but defended the "hiring of children to learn psalms and to learn chapters as a thing good, profitable to all, and a duty and part which any Christian may do without danger of infringing and entrenching upon other men's office".⁶ As this statement shows, Nicholas's practice of religion was informed by and inseparable from the hierarchical conceptions of social order and vocation that were still predominant in the early seventeenth century.

The Ferrars restored and decorated the tiny church of St John the Divine on the manor with suitable solemnity. According to John Ferrar, following the initial repairs most found it "very comely and decent", but Mrs Ferrar was determined to improve it, so the interior was stripped and fitted with floorboards and wainscoting, and pillars and arches were put around the walls. With its panelled wooden stalls, the arrangement was reminiscent of a college chapel. The pulpit and the reading desk were equivalent in position and height to symbolise the equal importance of prayer and preaching, as were the lecterns later installed in the church at Leighton Bromswold during the refurbishment that the Ferrars supervised. On the reading desk was a brass lectern in the form of an eagle, laden with a great Bible. The communion table stood lengthwise at the eastern end of the chancel, clothed as an altar, with silver candlesticks arrayed upon it. The chalice and patten

⁵ Philip Williams, a young Levant merchant, for example, made provision of £5 for ministers' widows in his will in 1647. Grassby, "Love, Property and Kinship", p.343. Will of Mary Collet, which is long and rich in detail, and certainly merits further examination. For perspectives on widows, single women, and ageing, see Lynn A. Botelho & Pat Thane (eds), *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500*, London: Addison Wesley Longmans, 2000.

⁶ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.72.

were silver, and there was a brass font, its cover in the form of a crown, though its exact location in the church is unclear.

And Nicholas Ferrar did in all this trimming, beautifying, and adorning the church wonderfully encourage his good mother who furnished the communion table with covering of blue silk and gold; the pulpit and the reading place was hung with blue cloth and silver lace and fringed richly, with cushions and valances round about each and booth-silk covering the floor upon which the communion table stood at the end of the chancel, with the benches covered with blue taffety and cushions of fine tapestry and blue silk.⁷

The rich blue, gold and silver “furniture” was used every Sunday and on feast days. For the other days, there were green cloths and “tapestry carpets”. The church was lit by numerous candles, a matter of necessity but perhaps also because of their symbolism, and decorated with flowers, both fresh and artificial.

Before going to church on Sundays the Ferrars always said preparatory prayers and “made themselves all more comely in their best attires, [Nicholas] persuading all sorts to be decent, neat and cleanly in their apparel, as a thing well pleasing to God and man.”⁸ The boys and their schoolmasters wore black gowns. Nicholas wore a surplice and hood to officiate. Good order and bodily deportment were enforced, such as processing to church in neat pairs and sitting according to gender and status, and they used physical obeisances including bowing low upon entering the church and kneeling.

It is plausible that the exemplary rationale which contemporary clerics offered for ceremonial usages and keeping good order in church appealed to the Ferrars, who, as has been shown, were concerned with the edification of the local community despite their remote and retired circumstances.⁹ In a 1642 pamphlet, the Revd Herbert Thorndike (1598-1672), who later became a favourite of nineteenth-century Anglo-Catholics, wrote:

but speaking of them whose minds are less withdrawn from their senses, how great impression shall the example of the world, practising the service of God in an orderly and reverent form, make in the minds of men that cannot receive it from their reason, but from their senses? ... The circumstances and ceremonies of public service are indeed a kind of paedagogy, whereby men subject to sense are guided in the exercise of godliness....¹⁰

⁷ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.69.

⁸ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.70.

⁹ On the correlation between material wealth and moral worth, and the consequent expectation of model behaviour on the part of local elites, see Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, p.155.

¹⁰ Herbert Thorndike, “The Service of God at Religious Assemblies” (1642), reprinted in *Theological Works of Herbert Thorndike*, Vol. I, part 1, Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844, pp.301-2, quoted in Rowell et al., *Love’s Redeeming Work*, p.198.

The didactic sense is consistent with an early modern gentry family's awareness of its superior status and the attendant social obligation. The Ferrars' use of ceremony may be understood as a manifestation, however reconfigured, of their paternalistic duty towards their humble neighbours, given that Revd Luke Grosse and his parishioners came to church at Little Gidding. Visitors were invited to join the family at worship too, including their Catholic neighbours who "came often", so the impression the Ferrars made in church was important.¹¹

The description of St John the Divine suggests that the Ferrars' attitude to church ornamentation was in harmony with the Laudian policy of fostering the "beauty of holiness" (Ps. 96:9) in English places of worship.¹² John Ferrar's terminology, with its references to "trimming, beautifying, and adorning the church", reflects the language of Arminian writers such as the Suffolk priest Robert Shelford, who proclaimed it was the responsibility of parishioners "To adorn and beautifie [their church] fit for his greatnesse", the first of ten "holy offices" that Christians owed to God.¹³ The Ferrars' standards for churchgoing were in fact concordant with the majority of Shelford's specifications: coming to church (and communion) well prepared and in an appropriate spiritual attitude; behaving reverently in God's sanctuary with respect to clothing and headgear, including proper vestments for the officiant; bowing to the altar; rising and kneeling appropriately during the liturgy; attending service on all the feast days; making spiritual sacrifices in the form of prayer, fasting and alms-giving; listening attentively during the service; and singing Psalms and hymns.¹⁴

The congruence does not prove that religion at Little Gidding was entirely Arminian, however, despite the characteristic sympathies; similar precepts for holy living including conduct at worship are found in many texts of the period. Furthermore, it cannot be labelled a Laudian institution since the Ferrars were well-established in their routine some time before Laud's injunctions came into full effect following his translation to the see of Canterbury in 1633. The precise date of the second, more extensive renovations to the Little Gidding church is not clear, although it almost certainly predates many of the

¹¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.90, where John notes further that Nicholas ensured that his family never returned their Catholic neighbours' visits. The frequency of such visits might be questioned; nothing of the sort appears in the surviving correspondence of the period, for example.

¹² On the connections between the "beauty of holiness" and Arminianism see Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c.1590-1640*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, pp.55, 194. Tyacke makes particular reference to the work of Robert Shelford, for which see the next footnote.

¹³ Robert Shelford, *Five Learned and Pious Discourses*, Cambridge: [Thomas Buck and Roger Daniel,] printers to the University, 1635. For church decoration, see pp.11-13 (quote: p.11). Shelford's book was openly critical of the Calvinists' position, with its affirmation of free will, declaration that the Pope was not Antichrist (for whom the world still waited), and bore dedicatory verses by such sympathetically-minded figures as Richard Crashaw, Richard Drake, and the bishop of Norwich, Richard Corbett.

¹⁴ For decorous use of the church and Shelford's 10 "holy offices", see the first sermon (discourse), "A sermon shewing how we ought to behave our selves in Gods house", *Five Discourses*, pp.7-55.

alterations made across the country in Laud's mid-1630s decorating campaign, and Mary Ferrar, who supposedly ordered the changes, was dead by May 1634.¹⁵ The communion table was clothed as an altar but seems not to have faced forwards, altar-wise, and there is no mention of altar-rails or any form of screen separating the sanctuary from the chancel. But it is important to note that John Ferrar openly recorded their ceremonial usages (or perhaps an idealised picture of them) when he wrote the *Life of Nicholas Ferrar* in the 1650s, listing details which like-minded churchmen would not fail to recognise and approve of, and, in the context of the presbyterian ascendancy, unambiguously throwing the family's lot in with the then proscribed Church.

The Ferrars were "conformable", tending towards ceremonialism.¹⁶ They worshipped in well-ornamented surroundings, with music, and they were accustomed to gestures such as bowing towards the east end on entering the church. Questions concerning the influence of connections beyond the household upon religion inside it, in particular those regarding the forces which shaped Nicholas Ferrar's beliefs, are inevitably fraught, and answers cannot be more than speculative.¹⁷ But Nicholas's formative exposure to developing Arminian views at Cambridge from 1606-13, not least through the influence of his tutor at Clare, Augustine Lindsell, cannot be ignored; nor can the more important fact of his continued friendly association with clergymen who were associated with the strengthening Arminian movement there.¹⁸ After Nicholas had left Cambridge, Lindsell became resident chaplain to Richard Neile when the latter was created bishop of Durham in 1617; along with fellow chaplains John Cosin and Francis Burgoyne, Trevor-Roper dubbed the bishop's men "the three musketeers of Durham House".¹⁹ Described by an opponent as "the oracle of our Arminian sectaries", at the time of his death in 1634 Lindsell was bishop of Hereford.²⁰

¹⁵ Diarmaid MacCulloch reminds that changes were made to English churches to facilitate Protestant worship before the advent of Laud, and also separate from his programme, in his "Myth of the English Reformation", p.13; so too Brian Quintrell with regard to the Calvinist bishop of Lincoln John Williams's construction of the finely-appointed chapel at Lincoln College, Oxford, consecrated in September 1631, "Williams, John (1582–1650)" in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29515> (accessed June 10, 2007).

¹⁶ Tyacke has written on the 41 "conformable" Essex clerics, including Joshua Mapleton, who signed a petition endorsing the prosecution of the heterodox lecturer at Chelmsford, Thomas Hooker, which was sent to Laud, then bishop of London, in November 1629. A petition supporting the validity of Hooker's position was signed by 49 ministers of stronger Calvinist persuasions. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp.188-91.

¹⁷ Patrick Collinson (discussing Erasmian rhetorical precedent in English Protestant literature of godly lives) is one of the many historians who have heeded the warning: "beware influence studies". "A Magazine of Religious Patterns: An Erasmian Topic Transposed in English Protestantism" in Derek Baker (ed.), *Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977, p.225, recalling Quentin Skinner, "The Limits of Historical Explanations", *Philosophy* 41(1966), pp.199-215.

¹⁸ For Arminianism at Cambridge, see Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, ch.2, and Trevor-Roper, "Laudianism and Political Power", pp.40-119.

¹⁹ Trevor-Roper, "Laudianism and Political Power", p.71.

²⁰ Peter Smart in John Cosin, *The Correspondence of John Cosin...*, vol. I., ed. G. Ornsby, Durham: Surtees Society, 52, 1868, p.175, quoted in Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p.118 & Andrew Foster, "Lindsell, Augustine (d.1634)" in *ODNB*; online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2006,

The Ferrars' links with Peterhouse and Pembroke are particularly notable, for with St John's these have been called "the three most Laudian colleges in the University."²¹ Ferrar Collet matriculated at Peterhouse in 1636, aged 18 years, and was admitted scholar on 16 May that year. He studied under Richard Crashaw and later, as young Fellow, found a mentor in Joseph Beaumont.²² Collet was ejected in 1646. Robert Mapletoft, Nicholas's friend, and brother to his nephew-by-marriage, Joshua Mapletoft, was a don at Pembroke. After the restoration he became successively Master of the College, Vice-Chancellor of the University and dean of Ely.²³

Nicholas's Cambridge acquaintances were helpful in obtaining materials for the concordance projects and in furthering his publication programme of the 1630s. Thomas Buck and Roger Daniel, the printers to the University, were responsible for issuing a number of important Arminian volumes, including Robert Shelford's *Five Learned and Pious Discourses* (1635), from which the quotations in this chapter are drawn. They also released Ferrar's editions, beginning with Herbert's *Temple* in 1633, and comprising translations that he prepared in conjunction with Herbert and Robert Mapletoft, with the assistance of Barnabas Oley. One of their collaborations, the dietary treatise *Hygiasticon* by the Belgian Jesuit Leonardus Lessius (Lenaert Leys, 1554-1623), based on Luigi Cornaro's (c.1467-1566) *Discorsi della Vita Sobria* (Padua, 1558-65), was published in 1634.²⁴

Together with Lindsell, "Dutch" Thomson, another of Nicholas's friends, may have persuaded him of the importance of translating and reproducing religious texts. Born in the United Provinces, one of his parents English and the other Dutch, Richard Thomson had moved to England in his youth, and by the time Nicholas was there, formed part of the "knot of extraordinary persons in Clare Hall (Mr Lake, Mr Ruggle, Dr Linsell, and Dr Butler, and Dutch Thomson)", being a philologist and senior proctor of the

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16721> (accessed Jan 2, 2007). Lindsell worked with Richard Montagu on his controversial publication *A New Gagg for an Old Goose* [*A gagg for the new Gospell? No: a new gagg for an old goose...* London: Thomas Snodham, 1624], on which see Tyacke, ch.6.

²¹ Trevor-Roper, "Laudianism and Political Power", p.109.

²² J. & J.A. Venn, *Alum. Cantab.* 1, I, p.371; Trevor-Roper, "Laudianism and Political Power", p.108. Beaumont was a beneficiary of Mary Collet's will (see chapter 1).

²³ J. & J.A. Venn, *Alum. Cantab.* 1, III, p.139. Robert had initially studied at Queens'. His brother Solomon Mapletoft graduated from Pembroke, and Joshua was at Clare with Nicholas Ferrar. Their father, Hugh, was granted his BA in 1582 from St Catharine's. Other sons of the Ferrar-Woodnoth-Mapletoft families studied at Trinity, Christ's and King's.

²⁴ *Hygiasticon: or, The right course of preserving life and health unto extream old age ... by Leonard Lessius*, Cambridge: Roger Daniel, 1634 (& second edn, R. Daniel & T. Buck, 1634). The year that Cornaro, "the Venetian Centenarian", was born is disputed, but seems to have been in the range 1457-75. Barnabas Oley wrote later, in the preface to Herbert's *Country Parson*, that their edition of Ludovico Carbone was refused a licence at Cambridge. Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.96, quoting Oley's preface to George Herbert, *Country Parson* in *Remains*. On hygiene literature and preventative medicine see Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, ch.4, and for Cornaro and Lessius, p.175.

college.²⁵ Thomson regularly visited his homeland and was familiar with many prominent European thinkers, being one of the few English Arminians personally acquainted with Jacobus Arminius.²⁶ Thomson was appointed to the team of translators who produced the text of the King James Bible.²⁷ Lindsell was a linguist of some distinction too.²⁸ Aside from their potential theological influence, their linguistic knowledge and work at the production and reproduction of Biblical texts may have inspired Nicholas Ferrar not only to translate treatises himself, but also to experiment with Scriptural concordance-making at Little Gidding and to encourage his nephew Nicholas Ferrar jun. to create polyglot harmonies.

Considering the dialogue between Nicholas Ferrar and his acquaintances in Cambridge Arminian circles in relation to the nature of the Christian observances he tried to implement at Little Gidding is constructive. Yet there is no basis for assuming direct continuity of Cambridge Arminian precepts and religious practice in the Ferrar household. A distinction must be observed between Nicholas's experiences and beliefs and those of the other family members, and between the content of the clerics' conversations and what this meant in praxis, if indeed their principles were applied at Little Gidding. And although, as John Ferrar and Edward Lenton's accounts of the Ferrars' manner of worship in church appear to indicate, Arminianism informed their style of Christian living, it is unlikely that this particular persuasion would have manifested itself in everyday beliefs and behaviours that were significantly idiosyncratic. Following Peter Lake's reasoning with regard to Elizabethan Puritans on this matter, they

are unlikely to have had a distinctive set of attitudes to issues like birth, death, marriage, work and sex. On the contrary, they are rather more likely to have expressed generally held contemporary norms with a greater zeal than their more Laodicean or worldly contemporaries could muster.²⁹

It is worth reiterating that, for all their differences, Protestants in post-Reformation England shared many precepts in common, which manifested in similar observances and habits of mind. Alexandra Walsham has clearly demonstrated such a phenomenon with regard to the prevalence of providentialism at the time.³⁰ The Ferrars fit amongst the

²⁵ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.47. D.K. Money, "Ruggle, George (*bap.* 1575, *d.* 1621/2)" in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24262> (accessed May 31, 2007). Ruggle was a Latin scholar and dramatist, who penned his most notable play, *Ignoramus*, in 1615.

²⁶ See Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p.36; Jonathan D. Moore, "Thomson, Richard (*d.* 1613)" in *ODNB*; online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2006, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27320> (accessed May 31, 2007). Amongst Thomson's friends were Isaac Casaubon and Joseph Scaliger, who met through Thomson.

²⁷ On the production of the King James Version, see Adam Nicolson, *Power and Glory: Jacobean England and the Making of the King James Bible*, London: HarperCollins, 2003.

²⁸ Lindsell had translated Theophylact's commentaries on the epistles of St Paul with Thomas Bayly, who had the work published in 1636. Foster, "Lindsell, Augustine (*d.* 1634)", *ODNB*.

²⁹ Peter Lake, "Puritan Identities" [review], *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), p.114.

³⁰ Walsham, *Providence*.

variety of early-modern Protestant groups, rather than being somehow removed, as their construction as High Church icons in the traditional historiography has sometimes tended to suggest. The ambiguities of the Church of England's theology at the time led to imprecision and heterodoxy in many points of belief and practice, and the range of adiaphorous matters left to personal interpretation, or indeed wanting reclassification after the break with Rome, added to the confusion.³¹ Latitude was more or less demanded of the national Church, which has historically come to make a virtue of this necessity. As far as this concerns means of understanding the organisation of belief in early-modern England, and in particular what practising Christianity meant in terms of day-to-day observances and the habits of individuals' lives, it is more useful, at times, to construe factional or confessional positions as differences in degree rather than in kind, especially with regard to the period before the Restoration Settlement. For while labels such as "Arminian", "Puritan", "Laudian", "prayer-book Protestant" and "avant-garde Protestant" have been coined because historians have observed both differences of theology during the period and the existence of communities which adhered to each set of beliefs, many of the religious practices of those groups were far less distinctive than is sometimes assumed.³²

Exceptional religious practices

Notwithstanding the arguments above, some aspects of religious practice at Little Gidding were outstanding, and it is to the most unconventional of the Ferrars' observances in the context of early Stuart England that discussion now turns.

To some contemporary observers, the Ferrar household bore an unsettling resemblance to a monastery, that most definitively Catholic of institutions. A pamphlet from 1641 entitled *The Arminian Nunnery* survives as eloquent testimony of the suspicion and disdain that the Ferrars met with at the hands of Calvinist detractors.³³ There were Catholic households in England at the time that had characteristics in common with Little Gidding, such as Dorothy Lawson's near Newcastle where Jesuits provided regular Masses

³¹ For Diarmaid MacCulloch's argument that ambiguities in the Settlements of the early modern Church of England were exploited by Anglo-Catholic historians to write the version of Anglican history that best suited them, see "Myth of the English Reformation".

³² Many have contributed to the debate about terminology, for example: Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603*, 2nd edn, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001; Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Early Stuart England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*; Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity, and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1993; and for the Elizabethan era, Christopher Haigh, "The Church of England, the Catholics and the people" in Haigh (ed.) *The Reign of Elizabeth I*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984.

³³ Anon., *The Arminian Nunnery*, London: printed for Thomas Underhill, 1641.

and the liturgy of the hours as well as religious training for children.³⁴ Laying aside the standard slur of popery, and the fact that “Arminian” was frequently used to the same effect, in view of the differences between their household and more conventional ones it is not difficult to understand how they were accused of operating a convent. The large house on the secluded property was equipped with spaces for prayer and the nearby church virtually functioned as a private “chapel”. It was inhabited by a number of unmarried women, who wore similar attire, slept in appointed, gender-segregated “apartments”, and answered to an unmarried, male spiritual director, Nicholas Ferrar. Their days turned on a cycle of devotions and regular attendance at church, and their lives and work were dedicated to God. Three features of religious life at Little Gidding, all of them generally associated with Catholicism, stand out as being particularly unusual for early modern English Protestants: contemplative religion, religious asceticism, and celibacy.

Contemplative religion

John Ferrar wrote that when his brother Nicholas became a deacon and determined to turn his back on commerce and politics, his mother Mary declared: “I also, by the help of my God, will set myself with more care and diligence than ever to serve our good Lord God, as is all our duties to do that all we may.” The decision to remain at Little Gidding meant leaving the world, “[a]nd the loneliness of the place also gave them the opportunity the more freely and quietly to serve God for they were the whole parish in their own house.”³⁵ It was not a living death, though consciousness of mortality and preparation for holy dying were concerns the Ferrars shared with a great many pious persons of their era.³⁶ John’s description of the final phases of Nicholas’s illness and his late meditations provide a model of calm resignation.³⁷ Prayer was to be the constant occupation of the each member of the family. As long as they lived in the household, there would be no obligation to engage in worldly employment other than what was required to maintain financial security and, for the young people, to learn skills that would serve them when they returned to more conventional circumstances. For the daughters, who would leave for conjugal homes, this meant the domestic skills necessary for household management (though servants were

³⁴ William Palmes, *Life of Mrs Dorothy Lawson of St Antony’s near Newcastle-upon-Tyne in Northumberland*, ed. G. Bouchier Richardson, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1851. For a brief discussion of similar families, see Alexandra Walsham, “Translating Trent? English Catholicism and the Counter Reformation”, *Historical Research* 78:201 (Aug 2005), pp.296-9.

³⁵ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.65.

³⁶ The dialogue that Blackstone dubbed “The Winding-Sheet”, from the Little Academy, is an obvious example of their concern with death, though even a cursory reading reveals it is filled with discussions of virtuous conduct in general, particularly as regards the body. Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.101-201.

³⁷ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.117.

retained to perform most of the work of cooking and cleaning), and for the sons, a basic education so that they could go on to university or to commence apprenticeships.

For Little Gidding was not envisaged as a permanent home for all the Ferrar-Collets: only those who chose to do so would reside there in seclusion until death, whereas the younger people would proceed to Christian lives in the broader community. The next generation was raised largely in conformity with prevailing standards regarding gender, lifecycle, and civic roles, this last in particular being an important obligation for gentlemen and a marker of the quality of a family.

The only other tasks enjoined of the family members were charitable service (running the dispensary, providing food for the poor, and training the psalm-children) and concordance-making, which were devotional acts, or works of practical piety. Indeed, in the reckoning of many Arminians, good works were necessary to salvation, in direct opposition to the standard solfidian doctrine which had enjoyed wide currency within the English Church. For example, Eleazar Duncon, the brother of Ferrar and Herbert's mutual friend Edmund Duncon, and like him a priest, was a prominent Cambridge Arminian amongst the Ferrars' acquaintance; Duncon chose the thesis: "Good works are efficaciously necessary to salvation" for the University's Commencement determination in 1633.³⁸

Though their domestic work was construed as a religious exercise, the Ferrars' commitment to the ideal of shunning worldly work was decidedly atypical, and not simply an extension of the principle of consecrated secular vocation that the reformers preached. During the Reformation the validity of the notion of lives dedicated solely to the work of prayer had been comprehensively rejected, and since the dissolution the Church of England had not supported religious orders or any similar form of corporate or contemplative religious life. In this light it is understandable that Little Gidding raised outsiders' interest and suspicion.

Edward Lenton wrote that, in discussing the family's devotional schedule when visiting the Ferrars in 1634, he had "said, if they spent too much time in praying, they would leave little for preaching or for their weekly callings. For the one I vouched the text, 'He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, his prayer is abominable', for the other, 'Six days shalt thou labour'." Nicholas replied to the first charge that the neighbouring minister, Luke Grosse, preached at Little Gidding and the Ferrars also attended his church, and "[t]o the other that their calling was to serve God; which he took to be the best."³⁹

³⁸ Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, p.54. The thesis is quoted in Tyacke's translation from the original Latin.

³⁹ Quotations in this paragraph are from Edward Lenton, letter to Sir Thomas Hetley in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.129-30.

Lenton was reluctant to accept this response, and countered with the accusation that for those of good health and sound bodies “it were a tempting of God to quit our callings and wholly to betake ourselves to prayer and fasting, and a contemplative life, which by some is thought little better than a specious kind of idleness; not to term it (as St Austin terms moral virtues without Christ) ‘splendidum peccatum’.” Nicholas responded “that they had found divers perplexities, distractions, and almost utter ruin in other of their callings”, and were now much improved. Lenton did not miss the materialistic concern in Nicholas’s statement, remarking that if any who were “in good case before” imitated the Ferrars and “thereby f[e]ll into poverty, few afterwards would follow the example.”

The Ferrars’ commitment to seclusion also meant forgoing customary interaction with their neighbours. Anna Collet, in character as the Patient during a meeting of the Little Academy, was able to declare confidently:

The Maintenance of State & honour in noble, of Creditt and Reputation in lower Conditions, is that which keeps the largest Meanes always at an Ebb, and the merriest Hearts on a continuall Rack ... Cares and desires touching Reputation, like flys and lesser Vermin in Fennish Countrys and sluttish houses, keepe mens mynds and bodys in a restless Vexation, ever buzzing in their Eares, ever biting on their Flesh & gnawing their Estates, at home & abroad, in Bed & at Board, in our pleasures & in our businesses, they put us to a restlesse shrugging, a Continuall Fencing, & an endlesse watchful Carking [fretting] all the Day, I [aye], & greatest part of the Night too.⁴⁰

To be sure, eschewing material things and earthly measures of worth signalled purity of Christian commitment, but they were principles easily embraced in theory. In practice, a family’s self-containment could be an affront to rules of sociability, and choosing not to acquire status symbols and ignoring the demands of fashion could, in connection, work to its social detriment.⁴¹ Their retirement did not always sit easily with their friends, either. In a letter to her husband’s close friend, John Ferrar, Lady Katherine Sandys expressed her disappointment that, during his illness, Sir Edwin was not visited by “some of his Litell Gidden friends”.⁴²

The Ferrars looked to history for examples of virtuous retirement, and Mary Collet in her guise as the Cheife led a series of sessions of the Little Academy dedicated to the case of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, who abdicated and withdrew to a monastery

⁴⁰ “On The Retirement of Charles V” in Williams, *Conversations*, pp.131-2. The Little Academy is discussed further in the next chapter.

⁴¹ On the importance of sociability amongst the gentry, see Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, ch. 8.

⁴² Katherine Sandys to John Ferrar, 16 Oct 1629?, FP, r4, 688(148-9).

in Spain.⁴³ Closer to home, with regard to “visiting the neighbouring gentry,” John Ferrar later offered the following practical explanation in their defence:

The family coming at first in that greater plague time, it was a cause in part their acquaintance was not made speedily; and so oft a year they preserved their family to live somewhat retiredly and, the gentlewoman old, there was not that compliment expected from them. And yet, to take away all suspicion of pride or incivility, they found, when they came to Gidding, all kindness and respects that was fitting towards them and so often made visits and did not at all expect requitals, which fell also luckily for the family and much lessened both charge and trouble in all kinds, yet had too much respect rather than too little from all the gentry about them, and some wished that they could also live as retiredly as Gidding did.⁴⁴

There is ample evidence that the belief in relinquishing worldly cares and involvement was promoted as an important means of clearing the path to godliness amongst the Ferrars, but the degree of their isolation and detachment in the 1620s and 30s remains open to question, and they never managed to relinquish their concern with reputation.

As for their devotional routine, the Ferrars’ daily observations comprised morning and evening prayer as specified in the Prayer Book, and on each hour during the day a party gathered and said devotions on behalf of the whole. They said the litany regularly, and each week repeated the lengthy thanksgiving prayer that Nicholas had composed after the family was delivered from insolvency and spared from the plague. The emphasis lay decidedly upon corporate worship. Most of these practices were in line with Shelford’s advice to attend church daily, as was usual in cathedrals and collegiate churches, and to say the litany on Wednesdays and Fridays.⁴⁵ In addition, John Ferrar claimed that Nicholas was determined that God’s mercy towards the family had been so great that they should show their gratitude “in a more than ordinary or usual way or custom than was practised by most, ...in such manner as was pleasing to him and agreeable to the doctrine of the Church of England and to the laws of the land”. Thus he instituted the practice of vigil prayer, proposing that “every night two at least should take their turns once in the seven nights to watch, and should begin it at nine at night and so continue till one in the morning.”⁴⁶

The vigils took place in oratories at opposite ends of the house, one for the women and the other for the men. Each pair recited all of the Psalms during the four hours, kneeling, and speaking a verse each in turn “interchangeably by way of responsal”, with

⁴³ For the dialogue, “On The Retirement of Charles V”, see Williams, *Conversations*, pp.3-156. For Williams’s discussion of the sources of Mary Collet’s version of Charles’s story, in particular the *Historia sui Temporis* of Jacques-Auguste de Thou (1553-1617), see pp.xlv-xlix.

⁴⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.90.

⁴⁵ Shelford, *Five Discourses*, p.45.

⁴⁶ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.92.

clocks and hourglasses to mark the time. Intervals were allowed during the winter to go to the fireside in another room. Organs were supplied and used from time to time for quiet singing. At one o'clock they knocked at Nicholas's door and left him a candle, not getting into their beds but lying on them "to inure them, upon any occasion that might happen, that they could do well without going into a bed."⁴⁷ Nicholas rose presently and went to his study to begin his day's devotions.

Five nights each week different pairs of family members made the night-watch. Nicholas took the two shifts remaining (later he added a third night), alone or accompanied by one of his nephews, Nicholas Ferrar or Ferrar Collet, who joined him on alternate weeks. Often in summer the boys and their uncle kept the watch in church. The boys went to sleep on benches at one o'clock, and Nicholas continued in meditation until five in the morning when they returned to the house. It appears that Nicholas instituted the night-time prayers some time after the regular routine had been established.

Praying at night was controversial amongst early modern Protestants, though not unheard of (Shelford invoked David's seven times of praise in declaring prayer appropriate in the morning, evening, at midnight and at noon), an inversion of the "common use of most of the world" who rested then.⁴⁸ Retrospectively, John Ferrar was careful to assert that the practice was doctrinally sound. He prefaced his description by pointing out how much better it was to stay awake at prayer rather than at "masking, dancing, carding, dicing, etc.", and stated that the vigils began only after Nicholas had consulted with George Herbert and several other learned divines to ascertain their propriety. If so, they must have predated Herbert's death on 1 March 1633. Nicholas also collected Scriptural verses about prayer at night, which he interspersed with his own prayers; they survive in a notebook containing his other meditations, together with portions of John's *Life*, in Cambridge University Library.⁴⁹ Though John wrote that the vigils were voluntary and the watchers "had fires all night and were otherwise provided that they took no cold to endanger their health, of which Nicholas Ferrar in all things was most careful", Nicholas's inclination towards ascetic devotion is as perceptible in the description as John's defensiveness of his brother.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.93.

⁴⁸ "Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments." Ps. 119:164. Shelford, *Five Discourses*, pp.46-7.

⁴⁹ MS Add. 4484 ("Almack"), Cambridge University Library, fols 11^r-13^r.

⁵⁰ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.92.

As time passed Nicholas's religious fervour increased and he slept less. He allowed only six hours in 24 for eating, sleeping, and everything else that was not work or prayer, and spent little time sitting near the fire. After his mother died in May 1634, he abandoned his usual four hours in or on a bed, which had placated her, and "did only lie upon a board with a white bear's skin under him and wrapping himself in a great shag black frieze gown, and from nine to one as you heard before."⁵¹ John reported that Nicholas's friends worried that he "did abridge his health and life by these means or otherwise was a kind of *fêlo de se*". Some "were pleased to tell him that he lived too retired and was too strict to himself that he came not abroad, nor took his recreation as was fit but was still at his book and study."⁵² John listed Nicholas's counter-claims, including his preference for death over that "which the world counts a happy life" for a gentleman ("to eat and drink, to rise and go to bed when they pleased, to hunt, to hawk, dice, play at cards, ride abroad and make visits, to take the air, to get a good stomach, to drink wine to cheer up the spirits, etc.").⁵³ John also maintained that it was commonly known that Nicholas's physical and mental condition was superior during his final seven years "when he was, as they thought, most strictest in these things."⁵⁴ Yet family letters show that, despite his intense activity, Nicholas's illness hardly abated, and may have worsened as the years wore on.

Nicholas believed in fasting and dietary strictures, both for their religious efficacy and for the preservation of good health. He was ill throughout his youth, and it is clear that his health was intrinsic to his developing conception of the practice of Christian living. In contemporary discourse, it was a commonplace that Christian individuals were obliged to preserve the health of the soul's physical vessel and to access the appropriate terrestrial means that God had provided in order to be healed in times of sickness.⁵⁵ Whilst at Cambridge, Nicholas had resorted to his sister Susanna's household at Bourn to recoup his strength. His physician, Dr Butler, told him "to starve away his aguish distempers", which, stated John, "was a kind prescription to him."⁵⁶ His tutor, Augustine Lindsell, had a similarly weak constitution, and it was on Lindsell's advice together with that of Butler, that

⁵¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.106.

⁵² Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.90-91.

⁵³ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.91.

⁵⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.106.

⁵⁵ For godly families guided by the Calvinist doctrine of means there was no doubt as to the obligation to access the best available medical care, including physicians (a medical degree was not necessary, but learned and pious practitioners of physic were favoured, possessing an authority akin to that of ministers). Early in the seventeenth century, the deference to authority was such that self-medication was regarded as tantamount to, or even worse than, deliberate suicide. See David Harley, "The Theology of Affliction and the Experience of Sickness in the Godly Family, 1650-1714: The Henrys and the Newcomes" in Ole Peter Grell & Andrew Cunningham (eds), *Religio Medici: Religion and Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996, pp.279-80.

⁵⁶ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.47.

Nicholas had departed for the supposedly therapeutic climate of Europe in 1613.⁵⁷ When he was terribly ill in Padua, Nicholas and an old physician decided to defer bloodletting for three days, to the consternation of the other practitioners, in which time he recovered. His advisors there told him that he might live to the age of 42 if he were temperate, and that his old age would be healthful if he kept a spare diet. Dr Butler, on the other hand, had “said but to 35 or 36 [years] and he foretold the very time and week if not the day of his own death.” And so it was that of all Nicholas’s observances “fastings were the greatest.”⁵⁸

Fasting was a familiar religious practice in early modern England. The sovereign ordered national fast-days to entreat divine mercy or assistance in times of war and contagion, and the godly governors of the Parliament did the same, whilst parsons decried overindulgence from the pulpits and urged parishioners to abstain from taking too much food and strong drink.⁵⁹ Early Stuart churchmen found precedent for the positive spiritual value of fasting in the second Elizabethan book of homilies, and staunch Calvinists and their opposites alike published treatises on the subject.⁶⁰ Most of the pamphlets dedicated to fasting are, indeed, the work of godly ministers such as Henry Holland, Arthur Hildersam and George Downham, though the beliefs of Henry Mason, author of *Christian humiliation, or, A treatise of fasting* (1625), were markedly anti-Calvinist.⁶¹ Instances of “prodigious abstinence” from food in nonconformist communities in the later-seventeenth century attracted significant popular and professional attention, such as Martha Taylor’s fast, which began late in 1667 and lasted until it was proved fraudulent in mid-1669. These

⁵⁷ “The health of Lindsell, a leading intellectual of the Arminian party, had often been a cause of concern to his friends. If [William] Prynne is to be believed, however, Lindsell died quite suddenly on 6 November 1634 as a result of the stress induced by quarrels with the dean and chapter of Hereford over the position of the altar.” Foster, “Lindsell, Augustine (d.1634)”, *ODNB*. Prynne believed Lindsell’s theological position to be severely erroneous, and may have intended this account of his demise as proof of the effects of moral and spiritual disease on the body. If it was the case that Lindsell was particularly sensitive to stress, it was a trait that he shared with his former pupil (at least as Ferrar has been constructed by several commentators, including Muir and White, *Materials*, p.30).

⁵⁸ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.52.

⁵⁹ For example, documents relating to the fast orders for the two visitations of plague that touched the Ferrars: *A forme of common prayer, together with an order of fasting: for the averting of Gods heavy visitation upon many places of this kingdome, and for the drawing downe of his blessings upon us...*, London: Bonham Norton & John Bill [printers to the King], 1625, issued by the Church; King Charles I, *A proclamation for a generall fast to be weekly observed thorowout the realme of England*, London: Robert Barker & the assignees of John Bill [printers to the King], 1636. The first Parliamentary ordinance regarding fasting was made in August 1642, followed by ordinances in December 1644, December 1646 and April 1649, the last repealing the established monthly fast in favour of appointed national days of penitence. See for example: “August 1642: An Ordinance for the better observation of the monethly Fast” in C.H. Firth & R.S. Rait (eds), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, 3 vols, London: Stationery Office, 1911, Vol. I, pp.22-4. For discussion of fasting and other supplicatory practices in times of trouble, see Walsham, *Providence*, pp.142-48.

⁶⁰ C.J. Kitching, “‘Prayers Fit For the Time’: Fasting and Prayer in Response to National Crises in the Reign of Elizabeth I” in W.J. Sheils (ed.), *Studies in Church History 22: Monks, Hermits and the Ascetic Tradition*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985, p.242.

⁶¹ Henry Holland, *The Christian exercise of fasting, private and publike*, London: the widow Orwin, 1596; Arthur Hildersam, *The doctrine of fasting and praier, and humiliation for sinne*, London: George Miller, 1633; George Downham, *The Christians sanctuarie*, London: Adam Islip, 1604; cf. Henry Mason, *Christian humiliation, or, A treatise of fasting*, London: G.P. [George Purslowe], 1625.

cases have been associated with nonconformist fasting practices and the crisis of dissent after the Restoration.⁶² More conventional references to fasting exist in autograph accounts that pious individuals made of their spiritual discipline in daybooks and journals, yet there is little indication that fasting was practised with any regularity or uniformity by the majority of seventeenth-century laypeople in the absence of a royal injunction.

Nicholas's concern was reflected in the translation projects of the 1630s mentioned above (Lessius, Cornaro and Carbone, which he may have encountered in Europe) and in the individual dietary control that he encouraged, at Little Gidding and amongst family members elsewhere.⁶³ He supported temperance in food and drink, especially at times when feasting was customary such as during the Christmas season, though no documents exist which reveal the exact nature of his dictates or whether he made a dietary rule. Moderate consumption was a sensible measure, endorsed by a host of early modern medical and religious authorities, and it was widely accepted that excessive indulgence led to moral decay and fuelled other fleshly appetites. Yet Nicholas fostered an attitude towards food at Little Gidding that came closer to renunciation than to moderation, in harmony with the rationale of forsaking the trappings of worldliness, and his prescriptions were doubtless especially authoritative given his medical expertise. His mother and his nieces also grew to suggest privations at Christmastime and, as has been shown, he encouraged participation in supplementary devotions such as the night watches.

The young women's dialogues in the Little Academy regularly returned to the theme of renunciation, which meant mortification and chastity as far as the body was concerned, evincing a general fear of the sinfulness of the physical nature that is almost certainly connected to the participants' gender.⁶⁴ (In contrast, the manner in which sick, perinatal and breast-feeding bodies are described in the family's letters is typically explicit.) Temperance is the subject of the discussions "On the Austere Life" (Williams's label), for example, which took place during Advent 1632, prior to the abstinent Christmas which the Cheerfull, Hester Collet, had advocated.⁶⁵ Wine, "dainties", and tobacco, and the necessity

⁶² Simon Schaffer, "Piety, Physic and Prodigious Abstinence" in Ole Peter Grell & Andrew Cunningham (eds), *Religio Medici: Religion and Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996, pp.171-203.

⁶³ For the collaboration with Herbert on these translations, see above and Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.94.

⁶⁴ On the primary identification of the female gender with physicality in late-medieval religious writing, including in the perception of the women themselves, see Caroline Walker Bynum, "... And Woman his Humanity": Female Imagery in the Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages" in C.W. Bynum, Stevan Harrell & Paula Richman (eds), *Gender and Religion: On the Complexity of Symbols*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1986, pp.273-4.

⁶⁵ The dialogue "On the Austere Life" is printed in Williams, *Conversations*, pp.159-315. The subject shifts to slander and gossip in the final section. The dialogues from the austere Christmas season of 1632-3 are printed in Sharland, *Story Books*.

of avoiding them feature in the conversation, which turns on how to discern an appropriate intake of food and drink.

Despite the compliance of several relatives, Nicholas's opinions and practices regarding food were controversial. In several instances he recommended bodily privation to relatives who soon discovered that it was a singularly unwholesome remedy. From the beginning of 1634, Nicholas Ferrar, Arthur Woodnoth, and Robert and Joshua Mapletoft all struggled with illnesses and were seriously worried about one another's health. In January, his concerns possibly heightened by his work on the Lessius translation, Robert Mapletoft wrote to Nicholas reporting the infirmity of several Cambridge friends, and urged Nicholas to take better care of himself.⁶⁶

At home in Essex, Joshua Mapletoft had been unwell for some time, and appealed to Nicholas for advice on how he should adjust his diet to his illness. It is not clear what Joshua's condition was, but he developed a huge ulcer in his throat, an affliction often caused by malnourishment.⁶⁷ In March he wrote to his sisters-in-law, Mary and Anna Collet, enjoining them to the Christian practice of temperance which he called a necessity and a source of joy, yet explaining that he was still too sick and too busy to try the diet that Nicholas had recommended again.⁶⁸ Apparently he realised that it was unwise to restrict his nourishment. His wife, Su, wrote a poignant letter to the same two sisters a fortnight later, apologising that she could not keep her diet "of weight and measure" any longer, begging their mercy and stating it was only because she was pregnant.⁶⁹ Su gave birth to a third son, Peter, later that year, perhaps in May, but more likely in late July-early August, when Joshua reported: "My dearest Su hath already found great difficulty in the beginning of her Nursery by the child's unquietnesse in the night & payne of her Breasts. My sonne John [then three years old] is also very ill by fitts Distempered."⁷⁰ Old Mrs Ferrar died in May and the death of Su and Joshua's two-year-old son Samuel probably followed soon afterwards, as he is absent from his father's will, written in September 1634.⁷¹

Nicholas's dietary restrictions appear to have followed a pattern common at the time, specifying set quantities and volumes of food and drink to be ingested each day, just as Carbone recommended. The letters are evidence of the network of mutual enforcement of the practices that existed between family members at Little Gidding and beyond: Joshua

⁶⁶ Robert Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, 30 Jan 1634, FP, r5, 925[472].

⁶⁷ Joshua Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, 3 Sep 1634, FP, r5, 952[530].

⁶⁸ Joshua Mapletoft to Mary & Anna Collet, 10 Mar 1634, FP, r5, 928[477].

⁶⁹ Susanna Mapletoft to Mary & Anna Collet, 25 Mar 1634, FP, r5, 930[481].

⁷⁰ Joshua wrote to ask Susanna Collet, Su's mother, to attend her daughter, who was ill in London, on 6 May. Joshua Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, 6 May 1634, FP, r5, 934[492].

⁷¹ Will of Joshua Mapletoft, prob. 30 Sep 1635, Sadler Quire nos 93-152, PROB 11/169, PCC, TNA, in which Joshua allocates lands to his sons John and Peter, and makes provision for his daughters Anne and Mary. An informal version of the will is contained in the test of a letter: Joshua Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, 3 Sep 1634, FP, r5, 952[530], Quote: Joshua Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, 6 Aug 1634, FP, r5, 949[524].

was a proponent and Mary and Anna Collet clearly acted as advocates of Nicholas's policies.

Yet by early August 1634 Joshua was still sick. Apparently having resumed his dietary regime, he wrote to inform Nicholas that he had been visited by several friends "who seriously impute my infirmity to the strictnesse of my dyet contrary to reason as I understand but they will not be so satisfied."⁷² He nevertheless asked for Nicholas's instructions regarding diet and exercise, stating that his doctor approved of the diet, only had forbidden him to eat rice and suggested French barley as a substitute. By September he was arranging his "last things", hoping that Su and his children could go to live at Little Gidding when he died.⁷³ There they would join his daughters Nan (Ann), his daughter from his first marriage, who was then between seven and eleven years old, and Mall (Mary), his first child with Su, who was about to turn five. Mall, the special care of her aunt Mary Collet, had been living at Little Gidding at least since the start of 1633, when she was less than three-and-a-half years old. In desperation, towards the end of the month Joshua went to London to see a new surgeon.⁷⁴

The resort to the new doctor was a success. In a letter of 9 October sent from Arthur Woodnoth's house in Foster Lane, Joshua addressed Nicholas and John Ferrar and Mary and Anna Collet collectively, reporting himself much improved in health and declaring his resolution thereafter to follow his doctor's instructions. He tactfully enquired of Nicholas how best to interpret such a mercy from God. He also revealed a new interest in the sacramental advice supplied him by Edmund Duncon, adopting the habit of monthly communion, more frequent than was typical of many Protestant contemporaries.⁷⁵

If our common freind & Deare Brother Mr Duncon be with you my desire is he should know that I have already resolved upon & begunne the practise of a moonthly Communion by his good example. But whither I shall for the matter of a part of the church service for the day as my dayly text: or the forme of prayer before sermon punctually according to the Canon the place considered where I live: And if it is not enquired after by Authority: I desire the matter may be debated betweene yow my deare freind & himselfe that I may have your judgment.⁷⁶

⁷² Joshua Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, 6 Aug 1634, FP, r5, 949[524].

⁷³ Joshua Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, 3 Sep 1634, FP, r5, 952[530]; Joshua Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, 18 Sep 1634, FP, r5, 953[532].

⁷⁴ Joshua Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, 25 Sep 1634, FP, r5, 955[536].

⁷⁵ For example, monthly communion was only recommended in the diocese of Peterborough in the visitation of 1637 ordered by Bishop Dee, a Laudian sympathiser. John Fielding, "Arminianism in the Localities: Peterborough Diocese, 1603-1642" in Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, p.105. For an alternative discussion of the significance of monthly communion, which countenances the possibility that it could be "a custom indicative of godly Protestantism", see Arnold Hunt, "The Lord's Supper in Early Modern England", *Past & Present* 161 (Nov. 1998), pp.51-4 (quote p.51).

⁷⁶ Joshua Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, John Ferrar, Mary Collet & Anna Collet, 9 Oct 1634, FP, r5, 957[5450-41].

As his question regarding liturgical details suggests, Mapletoft may simply have been aiming at best pastoral practice by instituting a regular Eucharist in his Essex parish. Yet in this context, given Joshua's illness, the logic of fortification by spiritual food, of imbibing the grace of the sacrament, and the fact that he had already begun to take monthly communion, seems correlated with Nicholas Ferrar's insistence upon fasting and limiting the consumption of everyday food. An interest in sacramental grace is not inconsistent with food control and fasting; nonetheless it is possible that the importance of Joshua's relationship of spiritual counsel with Nicholas was starting to diminish.⁷⁷ The instance illustrates the Ferrars' engagement with the resurgent sacramentalism of the 1630s.

As her husband's condition improved, Su Mapletoft wrote to Nicholas thanking him for his care of Joshua that year, and for his visit to their home at Margaretting. She was grateful for God's mercy, but she hoped the cure would be perfected by Nicholas's prayers; either she trusted Nicholas's intercessory power, or she realised that continued deference to him was proper, and expedient: probably a little of both.⁷⁸ She went to London to see for herself just how recovered her husband was, and was there, with her baby son and with Joshua's sister Dorothy, when Joshua's London doctors (Messrs Wright, Reade and Fleete) pronounced him cured on the evening of 23 December.⁷⁹ Sadly, her good fortune did not last, as Joshua relapsed and died the following year, his will proved on 30 September 1635.⁸⁰

Celibacy

In 1637, John Williams, bishop of Lincoln, then out of favour with Archbishop Laud and King Charles, was charged with perjury and tried in Star Chamber. The court found against him, and he was deprived of his benefices, fined, and interned in the Tower until 1640. Williams was Nicholas Ferrar's diocesan, and shortly before Nicholas died (on 4 December 1637), he visited the incarcerated bishop. John Ferrar in turn went to see Williams, soon after his brother's death. During his conversation with John Ferrar, Bishop Williams

⁷⁷ Indeed, abstinence from food before partaking of the Eucharist was recommended by Shelford, amongst other early-modern English authors (and continues to be practised by some Anglicans and Catholics today). Amongst Shelford's instructions were: "before thou comest to Gods house, to be of an empty stomach, that God may fill thy soul with graces; and after the sinnes of thy flesh, to punish and keep down thy body with the coarsest nourishments." *Five Discourses*, p.30. Many holy figures, particularly women, in later-medieval Europe, refused to consume anything but the consecrated host. See Bynum, "... And Woman his Humanity", and *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food for Medieval Women*, Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1987.

⁷⁸ Susanna Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, 5 Nov 1634, FP, r5, 960[548].

⁷⁹ Joshua Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, 24 Dec 1634, FP, r5, 974[576]; Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 24 Dec 1634, FP, r5, 975[578].

⁸⁰ Will of Joshua Mapletoft. The catalogue entry for the will lists it as having been proved on 18 Sep 1635, but in the document the date given is "the last day of September".

revealed that Nicholas had predicted that he would “come out of this place and rise to greater dignity but the times would be dangerous.”⁸¹ It was an important case of prophecy for John to record in the pious deacon’s biography, notwithstanding the safety of making such a claim after Williams’s restitution, reimprisonment, and eventual translation to the see of York in 1641. But alongside documenting what he called Nicholas’s remarkable “foresight of the times to come,” John emphasised the bishop’s approval of Mary and Anna Collet’s resolution to live unmarried: “And the bishop demanded of the family’s welfare and said: ‘I have now well studied the case of your virgin nieces, your brother’s great care, and I am armed to maintain their good resolutions, which God keep them in.’”

Williams was a confirmed Calvinist, though moderate, and as such it is surprising that he endorsed the sisters’ celibacy. His good opinion of the Ferrars was probably founded in his familiarity with John and Nicholas as a fellow investor “in the public affairs of Virginia plantation”.⁸² John wrote that Williams was at Little Gidding on four occasions, one of them presumably during his visitation of the sprawling diocese of Lincoln in 1634.

Mary and Anna were the first and third of John and Susanna Collet’s eight surviving daughters, born respectively in 1601 and 1603. Like their young uncle Nicholas, born in 1593, they never married, though the Ferrar-Collets otherwise cleaved to the marital ideal and envisaged marital unions as a normal and fitting objective for their children, especially their daughters.⁸³ Between Mary and Anna was born another daughter, Susanna, in 1602. When the family arrived at Little Gidding in 1625, Mary, Susanna and Anna were 24, 23, and 22 years old, not yet married, and the eldest members of their generation living in the household. Susanna was the first to wed, marrying the widower Revd Joshua Mapletoft in 1628. (Mapletoft and his first wife, Margaret Leggatt, had married in 1623, and had a daughter, Anne. Much later, Margaret Leggatt’s brother, Thomas, became the second husband of Margaret Collet, one of Susanna’s younger sisters.)

But Mary and Anna stayed on at Little Gidding long after their younger sisters had departed for their marital homes. Both represented their singleness as a way of life they had chosen actively. Mary decided on celibacy first, though the precise date of her resolution is not clear, and Anna’s determination not to marry was finalised in 1631 when she was 28 years old. By that time the sisters were older than the average age at first marriage of

⁸¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.108.

⁸² Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.101. Williams never married, and it is possible that this tempered his opinion, though less likely to have affected his views on the marital subjection of women. Quintrell, “Williams, John (1582–1650)”, *ODNB*.

⁸³ The relationships between Mary, Anna and Nicholas are discussed in detail in chapter 6.

contemporary Englishwomen, especially those of their social status, although they were not yet so old for it to have been entirely implausible.⁸⁴

Elective celibacy was anomalous in a Protestant culture that promoted marriage as the normal and most fitting arrangement for containing sexuality, an efficient means of achieving sexual and social control over women and thus perpetuating the patriarchal social order. Merry Wiesner-Hanks has summarised the situation, stating: “[t]he ability of an adult to reject a life which included sexual activity was denied by most Protestants, for whom celibacy also meant an abdication of his or her basic nature as a man or woman.”⁸⁵ The ability to live chaste was regarded as a spiritual gift, but an extremely rare one.⁸⁶ In the early Stuart era, women of marriageable age without significant impediment, such as a critical lack of means, had little chance of avoiding wedlock and being governed by a husband as a consequence. Yet those who did not marry within the typical age range were unlikely ever to wed.⁸⁷ Lettice, Viscountess Falkland’s notion that a facility for educating young singlewomen and a recourse for widows might be established at Great Tew is an extremely rare example of contemporary (1630s) thinking about an alternative mode of life for unmarried women.⁸⁸ Taking a longer view, Eamon Duffy has concluded that even during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, few Englishwomen genuinely sought to emulate the holy maidens who were held up to them as exemplars, but rather were interested in their power as intercessors with the divine.⁸⁹

Marriage was also central to one of the basic socio-economic units of early-modern English society, the independent marital household. Marriage and the headship of the new household that the couple established sometime after their union was a conventional marker of adulthood for men, and an arrangement which was promoted in popular

⁸⁴ Wrigley and Schofield determined that the average age at first marriage in England for the period 1600-1750 was 26 years for women and 28 years for men. E.A. Wrigley & Roger Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981, p.255.

⁸⁵ Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World: Regulating Desire, Reforming Practice*, London & New York: Routledge, 2000, p.265.

⁸⁶ For the majority of people the containment of sexuality in marriage was regarded as the best measure against sin: Eric Seeman, “‘It is Better to Marry than to Burn’: Anglo-American Attitudes Toward Celibacy, 1600-1800”, *Journal of Family History* 24:4 (1999), pp.397-419.

⁸⁷ David R. Weir, “Rather Never than Late: Celibacy and Age at Marriage in English Cohort Fertility”, *Journal of Family History* 9:4 (1984), pp.340-54. Amy M. Froide cites Wrigley & Schofield and Weir in the Introduction to her *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p.2.

⁸⁸ Much later in the seventeenth century Mary Astell famously proposed a college for unmarried women in *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, London: printed for R. Wilkins, 1694; on Astell and other ideas regarding Protestant nunneries in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, see Froide, *Never Married*, pp.170-74. See also Bridget Hill’s investigation of similar themes, “A Refuge from Men: The Idea of a Protestant Nunnery”, *Past & Present* 117 (Nov 1987), pp.107-30.

⁸⁹ Eamon Duffy, “Holy Maidens, Holy Wyfes: The Cult of Women Saints in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century England” in W.J. Sheils & D. Wood (eds), *Studies in Church History Volume 27: Women in the Church*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, p.189.

discourse via prescriptive literature as the way to ensure his financial prosperity.⁹⁰ The fact that marriage was the discursive norm at Little Gidding means that it is appropriate to consider the family history of these singlewomen, Anna and Mary Collet, in relation to that ideal, and to pay attention to how their singleness was accommodated, rationalised and spiritualised. It is also important to bear in mind the economic dimensions of their choices to remain unmarried whilst investigating the religious consequence of their celibacy.⁹¹

No comment survives in the archive to suggest that Nicholas Ferrar's celibacy aroused controversy. In fact, his singleness is barely mentioned. The only reference to his decision not to marry is in the *Life*, where John writes briefly of how a great merchant tried to "tempt" Nicholas with his beautiful daughter's hand and a dowry of £10,000, and found himself politely refused. The merchant was not satisfied:

'I tell you', said he, 'I am in love with you.'

'Well,' said Nicholas Ferrar, 'if nothing will satisfy you, I am purposed not to marry.'

The merchant attacking him further, [Nicholas] said he was resolved not to marry at all if God gave him continence. The merchant seemed much perplexed but said, if he did never marry, he should take it more patiently, and expressed great affection to him ever after.⁹²

As a deacon of the Church of England, Article 32 bound him no more to the married life than it did to the single.⁹³ Given Nicholas practised his belief with such attention to physicality, the implication of connubial sexuality was possibly distasteful to him. As a man, he did not need to be governed over; only to govern his family and himself, and he chose to do the latter by mastering his body. "His constitution so delicate as few women passed him (said the physicians)" may have been another disincentive to marriage and concomitant conjugal and paternal obligations.⁹⁴ However, it is also the case that his marriage stood to divide the family's assets further. At Little Gidding, his niece Mary Collet

⁹⁰ Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, ch3, esp. pp.73-5, and on the ability to lead and provision a household as a marker of patriarchal manhood, ch.7, some of which was published earlier as "Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England", *Past & Present* 167 (May 2000), pp.75-106. See also Christine Peters, "Single women in early modern England: attitudes and expectations", *Continuity & Change* 12:3 (1997), pp.331-2.

⁹¹ Peters concentrates on this distinction in early-modern arguments for the necessity of marriage for women throughout her article "Single women".

⁹² Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.58.

⁹³ "Article XXXIII *Of the marriage of priests*. Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, are not commanded by God's Law, either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage: therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christian men, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve better to godliness." (*Articles of Religion*, 1571.) B.W. Young argues that the Church of England was unique amongst the Protestant churches in providing its ministers, via Article 32, with the option to make a positive choice of celibacy integral to their vocation, not simply to practise chastity, which was desirable in all marriages. "The Anglican Origins of Newman's Celibacy", *Church History* 65:1 (Mar 1996), p.16.

⁹⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.47.

could perform the part of a wife, and above all, being single meant he would not have to divert his attention from his religious project.

In the seventeenth century, the universities were the main site where adult men lived unmarried, by obligation, many of them in holy orders. Nicholas had spent many formative years in these all-male collegial contexts, at Cambridge and on the Continent, and may have been happy to pursue a single life of study and prayer at Little Gidding similar to the one he had known, only in the bosom of his family. Apart from the masculine province of scholarship, Nicholas had proved his mettle in business and politics, so presumably his manhood was not at question. He did not surrender his masculinity to God at Little Gidding, but he did reconfigure it somewhat, taking on the headship of the patriarchal unit of the household and performing the role of ghostly father to his nieces, amongst others.⁹⁵

To reach an understanding that they could remain unmarried, Anna and Mary had to declare their intention to live as virgins to the rest of the family, pledging their commitment before the gathered household, which was the essential spiritual community in Protestant contexts generally, and especially so at Little Gidding – certainly more important to Ferrars than was the parish congregation. Marital arrangements were family business, impinging on the long-term welfare of the family network owing to their crucial material and social consequences. Marriage was an economic trade-off; a woman's marital family would provide for her subsistence, but her natal family must first furnish her new husband with a dowry. Strategic unions could mutually benefit the parties' families, enhancing professional, regional or political affiliations, for example. Mary and Anna deprived their relatives of potential alliances of this sort by choosing celibacy.

Yet given the straitened financial circumstances of the Collet-Ferrars and the number of children Susanna and John Collet had to establish, and above all the preponderance of daughters, it might be imagined that not getting husbands for the two eldest was, if not a necessity, at least a relief. As they lived under the direct rule of Nicholas, there was no serious threat of their being masterless; his spiritual paternity and practical headship in the Little Gidding household, and the presence of their biological father, more than supplied the authority that was mandated. Mary and Anna remained crucial contributors to the domestic economy, via their work and care of younger children, and also through the commitment of their personal financial resources to the extended natal family.⁹⁶ Further, it is possible that they enjoyed some measure of autonomy and respect by

⁹⁵ The gendered identities of single women and men in the Ferrar family are discussed further in chapters 6 and 7.

⁹⁶ In this regard the findings are consistent with Froide's argument that singlewomen were neither isolated from nor marginal to their natal families, economically or emotionally, in *Never Married*, p.7 & ch.3. See also Peters, "Single women", p.331.

virtue of having attained an age at which they were conceived of as being significantly mature, despite being unmarried.⁹⁷

In theological terms, their virginity, once they had promised for the sake of devotion never to forsake it, was valued and rationalised similarly to the way that Jeremy Taylor explained it in 1650 (though Taylor's works were controversial at the time owing to their pronounced Arminianism, and it would be years before he earned a generally favourable reputation):

Natural virginity of itself is not a state more acceptable to God: but that which is chosen and voluntary in order to the conveniences of religion and separation from worldly encumbrances, is therefore better than the married life, not that it is more holy, but that it is a freedom from cares, an opportunity to spend more time in spiritual employments⁹⁸

As Christine Peters has shown, the religious arguments advanced by the Catholic Church and by the reformers linking virginity and sanctity, and the logic by which celibacy was valued, were substantially continuous, and relied upon the pursuit of a holy life rather than the intrinsic merit of the physical state of virginity.⁹⁹ It was thus very important that the Collet sisters' celibacy was intentional, a decision taken freely and understood to be binding.

The fact remains, though, that for Nicholas, Mary and Anna, no diminution of care for or involvement with their family resulted from their decision not to marry, which some proponents of celibacy envisaged as being amongst the chief aids to sanctity that the state afforded. Not being married arguably heightened their attachment to the family, as John Ferrar implies in describing Nicholas "as such a brother, whom the world never could show a better brother to any brother, nor a more true lover and one that did more for his family than he did, in all kinds and ways".¹⁰⁰

Characteristically amongst the Ferrars, an exchange of letters confirming Anna's intentions accompanied, and indeed perhaps outweighed, the verbal declaration of her resolution to remain unmarried. Anna addressed her family in July 1631, thanking them for consenting to her wish to live in "A Virgins Estate".¹⁰¹ She took care to explain that she believed her desire was informed by God's will, even if her judgement was impeded by her corrupt mortal faculties; she needed to prove that she was not simply flouting the

⁹⁷ Peters makes the case for age determining adult status and a degree of economic independence for singlewomen in "Single women", pp.326, 334.

⁹⁸ Taylor, *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, rev. Eden, p.56.

⁹⁹ Peters, "Single Women", p.327.

¹⁰⁰ Ferrar, *Life in Muir & White, Materials*, p.95.

¹⁰¹ Anna Collet to her family, Jul 1631, FP, r4, 802[455-6], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.263-4. For the full text of the letter see Appendix B.

institution out of wilfulness or defiance. She professed her esteem for the married state, a necessary claim in the context of her family and given the tenets of Protestantism in general, and disavowed the superiority of celibacy. Further, she asserted that she made her choice freely, not because of someone else's influence or pressing. In doing so, Anna did not necessarily mean to disassociate Nicholas in particular from her decision to remain unwed, but certainly there was motive enough for her to have intended as much: true or not, his (or anyone else's) discovery as proponent of elective celibacy in favour of marriage would have entailed significant risk of censure. In view of his being unmarried and the singular relationships he maintained with the two unmarried sisters, the unconventional aspects of Nicholas's condition were sufficiently conspicuous already. And always special efforts would have been required of Anna, Mary and Nicholas to maintain their particular relationships. Here Anna was likely negotiating a line between the image of proper respect for a senior male relative, augmented as it was in scope by the exceptional devotion to Nicholas permitted of the whole family, and depicting too much familiarity.

It is noteworthy that, on Nicholas's advice, the sisters eschewed the taking of vows. The Ferrars almost certainly wished to avoid the association of vows with holy orders, first and foremost those taken by nuns (and male religious) and therefore too heavily Roman Catholic in connotation, but also, feasibly, those made by men of their own Church upon clerical ordination.¹⁰² No evidence supports the notion that Nicholas wanted to establish the sisters in a state parallel to his own in sanctity or authority by virtue of some fabricated vows. To do so would have struck out against the conventional gender order; moreover, given his religious orthodoxy, it is not conceivable that he would have sought an innovation like a new spiritual office for women, much less taken ritualised steps to render it more concrete.

In any case, it is reasonable to suppose that even very sympathetic souls might have glimpsed the bogey of monastic celibacy and clandestine Catholicism looming about Mary and Anna Collet. At "their Carthusia", the women of the family were dressed uniformly in black costumes, and the visitor Edward Lenton reported that one of Susanna Collet's

¹⁰² Luther and Calvin both held that virginity and celibacy were states no more spiritual than marriage, notions which were basic to most mainstream forms of early modern Protestantism. Active heterosexuality organised in marriage accompanied the understanding of gender in terms of a physical sex binary of man and woman. "Luther even suggests that vowed virginity is unnatural: 'Who commanded you to vow and swear something which is contrary to God and his ordinance, namely, to swear that you are neither a man nor a woman, when it is certain that you are either a man or a woman, created by God.'" Theodora A. Jankowski, *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000, p.11, quoting Martin Luther, "Sermon at Merseberg" (1545)" in *Luther's Works*, vol. 51, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann & Yaroslav Pelikan, St Louis & Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing & Fortress Press, 1958, p.362.

daughters (probably Mary) wore a grey Franciscan habit.¹⁰³ The 1641 publication of the derogatory pamphlet entitled *The Arminian Nunnery* confirms that suspicion about the nature of the Ferrars' religious affiliation existed, and it turned on the status of the young women. Printed and "[h]umbly recommended to the wise consideration of this present Parliament" in the year that Laud was committed to the Tower and the Commons passed resolutions for the destruction of papist images and the altar rails, crucifixes and candlesticks typical of Laudian church decoration, the pamphlet drew unwelcome attention to the Ferrars and placed them at risk of severe castigation. Indeed, John Ferrar, his children Virginia and John, and Mary Collet went on to pass perhaps two or three years' exile in the Low Countries during the early 1640s.¹⁰⁴

Ultimately, neither Mary and Anna Collet's unmarried status, nor the religious filter through which their celibacy was construed and supported, were exceptional in the context of early seventeenth-century England. The proportion of English women who never married grew as the century drew on (Froide has estimated the percentage of never-married adults, male and female, as being at least up to 20% in the period 1575-1700) and the phenomenon of life-long female singleness became increasingly accepted, such that women who chose not to marry stood to enjoy relatively liberated and materially comfortable lives, often based on their own earnings.¹⁰⁵ The clerical authorities had to allow people to remain single, as a matter of orthodoxy and a state of life specified in Scripture as being favoured. Williams, who approved the Collet sisters' celibacy, was by no means an anti-Calvinist. In not marrying, Mary and Anna were consistent with the upper-limitation of age dictated by custom and economic necessity in early modern England, and their involvement with their family of origin, and the practical, emotional and financial utility of that relation, was also normal for singlewomen of their social status. The only real need for caution was in avoiding the appearance of popery, and with their habits and the monastic-style cycle of devotions, it was on this front that Little Gidding and the Collet sisters failed to make a conventional impression.

¹⁰³ John Ferrar seems to have used the term "Carthusia" without hesitation, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.64; Lenton, letter to Hetley in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.132. Joyce Collet refused to wear a habit like her sisters did: "On The Retirement of Charles V" in Williams, *Conversations*, p.136.

¹⁰⁴ Anna Collet had died in 1639.

¹⁰⁵ Froide's estimate is an adjustment of Wrigley & Schofield's non-gender-specific 13-27% of never-married adults for 1575-1700 (*Population History of England*, pp.255-65). For the wage-earning careers of singlewomen and the development of the term "spinster" as a title identifying singlewomen as a social group in the later seventeenth-century, see (amongst others) Pamela Sharpe, "Literally Spinsters: A New Interpretation of Local Economy and Demography in Colyton in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", *Economic History Review* 44:1 (1991), pp.46-65.

Criticism and reputation

Nevertheless, the Ferrars faced opposition owing to outsiders' hostile perceptions of their religious. A few examples have arisen in the preceding material, such as Edward Lenton challenging Nicholas Ferrar on the validity of a life devoted solely to prayer. The nature of the archive, dominated by the near-hagiographic biography of Nicholas and the collected family correspondence that he controlled, selectively, during the period in question, goes some way towards explaining the relative lack of surviving negative information about Little Gidding. Yet the Ferrars' concern to maintain the family's reputation, and in particular the defensive posture that John Ferrar employed in the *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*, reveal the grounds upon which they expected to be criticised. From these signs a general impression of their strategies of deflecting accusations of heterodoxy may be sketched.

In Nicholas's biography, John reproduced part of the description of his brother and Little Gidding that Barnabas Oley had included in his (anonymous) preface to Herbert's *The Country Parson*, published in 1652 when John was writing the *Life*. Oley wrote of Nicholas's troubles:

He was so exercised with contradictions, as no man that lived so private as he desired to do could possibly be more. I have heard him say, valuing (not resenting his own) sufferings in this kind, that to fry [on] a faggot was not more martyrdom than continual obloquy. He was torn asunder as with mad horses, or crushed betwixt the upper and under millstone of contrary reports: that he was a papist, and that he was a puritan.¹⁰⁶

In addition, when Nicholas lay dying, a rumour spread that he was a magician, owing to the fact that he ordered the profane books in his library to be burnt on the site where he would be buried.

Oley was celebrating the churchmanship of Herbert and Ferrar, their "transcendent dexterity in defending, the Protestant religion established in the Church of England", against the background of the godly ascendancy, so it fits that he portrayed Nicholas as wedged between a rock and a hard place and included the allegation of Puritanism. Tales of persecution are a staple of sectarian mythology in all its forms, and the endurance of heroic figures is a stock motif. On the latter charge, he claimed that Nicholas always treated those "brethren that erred on the right hand" respectfully, but bewailed their mistakes and their disdain for the liturgy and sacraments. But it is clear that the greatest internal fear and external threat was embodied in the first charge, of Romish error. Oley reported that the Catholics who had helped Nicholas in Padua while he was ill had really plotted to "infect

¹⁰⁶ Oley, quoted by Ferrar in *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.95.

his soul”, and that in his secluded pious life at Little Gidding he outstripped the virtue of “the choicest of their retired men”.¹⁰⁷

John Ferrar used Nicholas’s hospitality towards the Ferrars’ Catholic neighbours to demonstrate his brother’s magnanimity. “Their next neighbour was a Roman Catholic gentleman that kept a priest in his house. This gentleman and his wife came often to Gidding,” and, as mentioned, the visitors were invited to join the family at prayer. But the end of John’s sentence reveals a qualified welcome: “Nicholas Ferrar carried it so discreetly that none of his family returned their visits, however invited, for he would say to the young people: ‘He is wise and good, and likely to continue so, that keeps himself out of temptation.’”¹⁰⁸

The prudence of such a remark on Nicholas’s part contrasts with the bluntness of his defensive response to Edward Lenton’s questioning in association with the rumours he had heard about “the nuns of Gidding”. The following text is reproduced from Lenton’s letter to Sir Thomas Hetley, where he recounts his interrogation of Ferrar. It is a useful gauge of the kind of hearsay about Little Gidding that existed at the time of his 1634 visit. Solid evidence of this sort is very scarce.

I first told them what I had heard of the nuns of Gidding; of their too much watching and praying all night, of their canonical hours, of their crosses on the outside and inside of their chapel, of an altar there richly decked with tapestry, plate, and tapers, of their adorations and genucinations at their entering therein. Which I objected, might savour of superstition and popery.

Here the younger son [Nicholas], the mouth of them all, cut me off, and to this last answered first with a protestation that he did as verily believe the Pope to be antichrist as any article of his faith. Wherewith I was satisfied and silenced touching that point.

For the nunnery, he said that the name of nuns was odious. But the truth from whence that untrue report might arise was that two of his nieces had lived, one, thirty, the other, thirty-two years, virgins; and so resolved to continue (as he hoped they would) the better to give themselves to fasting and prayer; but had made no vows.¹⁰⁹

Nicholas’s vehement assertion that the Pope was Antichrist makes sense in context as it ought thoroughly to have vanquished the allegations of Catholicism, and much the same can be said about his insistence that Mary and Anna Collet had not, technically, taken vows; but in different circumstances the first statement might have been unusually confident for an individual whose beliefs were ostensibly Arminian. Tyacke has shown that in Arminian thought the common Protestant certitude that the Pope was Antichrist was

¹⁰⁷ Oley, quoted by Ferrar in *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.96.

¹⁰⁸ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.90. It is interesting that Catholicism is implicitly “tempting” in this formulation in view of the “defections” to Rome of Crashaw and several other Peterhouse fellows.

¹⁰⁹ Lenton, letter to Hetley in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.129.

destabilised, if not dismissed outright as it was by Robert Shelford in his fifth *Discourse*, and that in general Arminians were more accommodating in their attitude towards Catholicism.¹¹⁰

The Ferrars assumed a defensive posture to meet with the world as a means of limiting the damage to their reputation that might be caused by overmuch exposure, unfavourable or distorted eye-witness reports, and gossip. John wrote that visitors “took it not amiss” when they were offered only “civil but not costly” courtesies on coming to Little Gidding: “[a] cup of wine or beer and a cake”. Material considerations were very important too. He explained that Mrs Ferrar and Nicholas had decided to enforce the policy of inviting none to share meals or stay overnight from the outset, anticipating the “great expense of estate, time, etc.”, even though it meant that “many persons of quality who of purpose came late and stayed later, thinking, or not knowing Gidding orders, that they, as in other gentlemen’s houses, should be entertained and lodged ... departed late at nights to towns adjoining.”¹¹¹ Accommodating all comers would have been a drain on the family’s resources, but such hospitality was nonetheless customary amongst the English gentry.¹¹² The “inscription” that hung in their great parlour for visitors to read is a neat summary of the family’s attitude towards outsiders (see Appendix B).

The Ferrars were afraid that they would suffer hostile judgement. Despite assurance of the righteousness of their undertaking, they were conscious that their way of life was in some respects anomalous. Yet there is no evidence that they thrived on the basis of a persecuted identity, as is the case with some sects. When their enterprise did weaken, it was not because of stagnation or the diffusion of purpose when the persecution abated; rather it was caused by the loss of a positive force, namely Nicholas Ferrar, and the authority and holiness that were imputed to him.

Conclusion

The Ferrars negotiated the events of everyday life with reference to the conventional foundations of Protestant belief in early seventeenth-century England and according to social and ethical standards that were generally conventional for people of their status. Further, many of the Ferrars’ values are hardly distinguishable from those of thoroughgoing Calvinists inside and outside of the Church of England. Many godly folk

¹¹⁰ Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, pp.55 (Shelford), 172, 186.

¹¹¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.89.

¹¹² Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, pp.282-89; see also Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.

would have approved of their ascetic practices, and their shunning of games and festivities, especially at Christmastime, as well as a good deal of the rationale behind them, and they would have found their unrelenting self-scrutiny and striving for spiritual improvement quite usual.

The picture of the family's beliefs and practices betrays ambiguities, in part a result of the fragmentary and partial nature of the surviving evidence, but also because their lives were not bound by an especially clearly formulated set of religious prescriptions: Nicholas Ferrar did not set out for Little Gidding with a blueprint that was put into place there, and there was no rule of life as in a monastery. Nicholas's central position in the traditional historiography and the desire to celebrate his pious and insightful leadership have resulted in a tendency to assume that the Ferrars' way of life was the product of an intentional plan, and that Nicholas, implicitly, was the planner. Nicholas's leadership was crucial, as the statement in the preceding paragraph attests; he earned the devotion of his family, and he was well-connected, well-educated, and authoritative. But the Christian "way of Little Gidding" evolved with the participation and the complicity of the men and women of the Ferrar and Collet families, and was shaped by the very earthly exigencies of family life. Circumstances demanded ad hoc responses, and some of them contradicted one another. The objectives of exemplary holiness, for example, and seclusion, were not perfectly reconciled.

Some aspects of the Ferrars' religious life were unusual, including their privileging of the work of prayer over mundane vocations, the presence of celibate women in the household, and their experimentation with devotional forms, from dietary strictures to the practice of making Scriptural concordances. But on most fronts their innovations were practical, and had parallels in contemporary practice. Orthodox adherence to the faith as interpreted by the Church of England was a matter of importance to the family, and they sought to defend their allegiance in the face of accusations of deviance, even when presbyterianism was enforced by the parliamentary administration. The Ferrars had direct ties with significant clerical figures and theologically-informed members of the University of Cambridge. They raised their children as members and servants of the English Church, and regarded the clerical vocation as a worthy goal, anticipating the Collet sisters' marriages with conformable ministers. The routine by which their pious practices and daily tasks were ordered provided constancy but their principles were neither intractable nor especially unusual in relation to those of co-religionists in the early seventeenth-century.

4 The Little Academy: moral exempla, gender and performance in the education of young women

In 1670 Dr John Worthington, sometime vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge and an accomplished translator, was asked to edit the Ferrar manuscripts.¹ While the Ferrar papers were still his charge, Dr Worthington wrote about them in a letter to his friend, the Independent clergyman and writer Dr Nathaniel Ingelo, explaining “that several of Mr. Ferrar’s MSS., are in the way of Dialogues or Speeches, not unlike to the method you use in your *Bentivolio*”.² Ingelo had written a satirical romance in dialogue form called *Bentivolio and Urania* as a vehicle of religious and moral exhortation, published in two best-selling instalments in 1660 and 1664.³ Based upon Ingelo’s familiarity with the mode, Worthington suggested, unsuccessfully as it turned out, that he take on the task of editing the Ferrar papers, adding:

I need not tell you, how much I value the piety and labours of that worthy person [i.e. Nicholas Ferrar], and upon that account need no arguments to persuade me to the liking of the work. But foresee the vastness of the labour and pains that is necessary upon this occasion, to undertake this work as it should be.⁴

The dialogues that Worthington remarked are the subject of the present chapter. Years later the Oxford antiquary Thomas Hearne obtained the Ferrar documents from Dr Worthington’s son and in 1730 published some “Papers relating to the Protestant Nunnery of Little Gidding in Huntingdonshire” as an appendix to his edition of Thomas Caius’ *Vindiciae antiquitatis Academiae Oxoniensis*, including selections from the dialogues.⁵ Hearne

¹ Worthington did a little work on the papers but died in 1671, when the task fell to Dr Francis Turner, later bishop of Ely (1684). Turner compiled the first complete biography of Nicholas Ferrar, probably during 1678-9 when he in turn was serving as vice-chancellor of Cambridge. Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.6-7. Worthington’s commission came from Timothy Thurscross (or “Thristcross”), a clergyman friend of Nicholas’s who sought to publish some of the family papers, including the *Life*. For details, see Muir & White, *Materials*, p.5. Thurscross was associated with a number of notable conformists of the time apart from Ferrar, including George Herbert, Izaak Walton and Durham prebend and exponent of the Church of England in the Near East, Dr Isaac Basire. He was no doubt a supporter of the apologetical project for the newly Established Church of England. For an example of Thurscross’s letters to Ferrar: Timothy Thurscross to Nicholas Ferrar, 14 Sep 1636, FP, r5, 1038 [741-3].

² John Worthington, letter to Dr Ingelo, 4 June 1670, in Richard Copley Christie (ed.), *The Diary and Correspondence of Dr John Worthington*, vol. 2, pt II, Remains Historical and Literary connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester Vol. CXIV, Manchester: printed for the Chetham Society, 1886, p.336-40, quote: p.339.

³ Nathaniel Ingelo, *Bentivolio and Urania in four bookes*, London: J.G. for Richard Marriott, 1660. Nathaniel Ingelo, *Bentivolio and Urania, the second part, in two bookes* (i.e. books 5 & 6), London: J. Grismond for Richard Marriott, 1664.

⁴ Worthington, letter to Ingelo, 4 June 1670, in *Correspondence*, vol. II, pt II, p.337.

⁵ Thomas Hearne (ed.), *Thomæ Caii ... Vindicia antiquitatis Academiae Oxoniensis contra Joannem Caium, Cantabrigiensem ... & reliquias quasdam, ad familiam religiosissimam Ferrariorum, de Gidding Parva in agro*

called the dialogues the “Maiden Sisters’ Exercises”, and that is essentially what they are: transcripts of the proceedings of an educational circle at Little Gidding made up of many of the daughters of Susanna Ferrar and John Collet and called the Little Academy.⁶ The sisters met to participate in a form of loosely Socratic or Platonic-style dialogues through which it was supposed they should gain pleasure and moral edification, each participant having composed and memorised the content of her part of the dialogue before they assembled.⁷

The Little Academy is an unusual phenomenon; it is not typical to find oratorical activities in the schooling or leisure pursuits of young women outside of aristocratic or court circles in the early Stuart period, for the obvious reasons that women’s public speech and their possession and demonstration of knowledge were not ideologically condoned. It begs investigation on a number of fronts. This study concentrates on the dialogues performed during 1631 and 1632 when the Little Academy was functioning at its peak and the meetings were relatively frequent. It shows how dramatic performance was incorporated into the Ferrars’ devotional and didactic routine through the dialogues. “Storying”, as they called the practice, provided suitably moral entertainment and, by representing events from the history of the outside world, was a regulated means of bringing secular knowledge to women in the secluded religious household. The rejection of worldly things in favour of simplicity and the inner life of the spirit were precepts fundamental to the design for Christian living at Little Gidding, and a high proportion of the exempla are instances that turn on the choice between carnal or material indulgence, and renunciation. Insofar as the Collet sisters’ knowledge of history and the world beyond their household was augmented through their storying, the process was weighted such that they were compelled to reject these glimpses at other ways of life as being inferior to their path of self-denial and devotion.

Huntingdoniensi, pertinentes, subnexuit, 2 vols, Oxford: Sheldonian Theatre, 1730. Vol. II, p.670, quoted in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.7, 17. Mayor included some of Hearne’s fragments in an appendix to his *Two Lives* in 1855. By the late nineteenth century, three of the five known folio manuscript booklets of the dialogues had come into the possession of the British Museum, and two were held by Lady Lyell, a Ferrar descendant. Emily Cruwys Sharland set out to publish the whole series, but released only a volume reproducing the British Museum’s first folio and the first part of the second in 1899. Sharland, *Story Books*, pp.v-vi. Blackstone printed one of the dialogues, “The Winding Sheet”, in his *Ferrar Papers* (1938), pp.95-201 and a further two feature in Williams’s *Conversations*. For further bibliographical detail, see Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.xiii-xxi, 3-18.

⁶ Girls’ boarding schools, established to cater for the daughters of the gentry from the late sixteenth century onwards, were known as academies. Kenneth Charlton, *Women, Religion and Education in Early Modern England*, London & New York: Routledge, 1999, pp.131-41. The children of Little Gidding did not leave the household for their education: the boys had a schoolhouse and schoolmasters on site, and the Little Academy was for their older sisters (their older brothers were apprenticed in trade in London).

⁷ Reading a story rather than telling it from memory was regarded as exceptional. For example, the Moderatour is noted as having “obtained the privilege for that once to read her story, which shortnes of time and other occasions had not given leave fully to finish, much lesse to committ to memory,” 29 Dec 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.82.

The chapter emphasises the significance of the Academy's role as a key site within the household where a process of mediating and dispersing values occurred. Young women identified and defined moral precepts for themselves by viewing events of the recent and distant past through a Christian filter. Importantly, this included settling on appropriate standards with regard to the gender-specific constructs and states of patriarchy, maternity and virginity. These benchmarks were set in accordance with the notions promulgated as orthodox within the family (and thus compatible with the Ferrars' social status and confessional identity), matters substantially determined via Nicholas's influence. The Collet sisters rationally constructed and furthermore acted out the contours of the confinement that their family and culture prescribed, defrayed through the dialogue tropes, which offset seriousness with spectacle or a note of humour.

The dialogues are an example of a mechanism through which values were internalized in an early modern domestic context, one to which female literacy was critical; the reader observes how the sisters learned and moreover became advocates for the discourses that effected their subjugation. Both the medium and the context of their "playing" were controlled. Generic convention was deployed with acute effect to shape their sense of proper conduct and achieve conformity, at least of mind, with 'family' values. And the routine of composing and then reciting their stories before an audience, comprising supervisors of the parental generation and younger children in whom virtue had to be instilled by example, bound the young women with the threat of charges of failure or hypocrisy if they did not apply in their daily or future actions the principles they championed. As the Cheerefull said, "To know these things and not to follow them will procure double stripes."⁸

⁸ St Andrew 1632, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.242. As a measure of the consequence of their commitment, consider the case of the Resolved (John Collet) in the preamble to the "Winding Sheet" He suggested that the participants should be bound to enacting in reality what they recommended in the stories, going so far as to state that doing so was as important a public testimony of faith as their baptismal vows. (Blackstone, *Ferrars Papers*, p.110).

For inasmuch as the Busines was of so high a Nature; as their vows in Baptisme only excepted, there was perhaps no other publick Profession, that they ever had, or were ever like to make equall unto it in the weight & worth of the Consequences thereof, it was adjudged absolutely necessary, that it should be distended in writing for the clearer Expression of their present intents, & for their surer Obligation to Constant Practize of them. Whilst they should by this meanes become liable not only to the secret remorse of their own Consciences, but to the smart & shame of open reproof & Tax from the world, remaining Prevaricators upon Record, if they should doe lesse or otherwise then they had thus bound themselves unto by deed indented and Enrolled as I may say.

The Nature of the Storying

In the meetings of the Little Academy, the Collet sisters made a “survey of those opinions and practizes which the world recommends or disallows”. Rational enquiry was encouraged within the limits of a notion of “true and right Reason”, which discerned “according to the weights and by the standard of Scripture” rather than using “the scales of common Judgement”.⁹ A likeness with the Erasmian and broader humanist thought and pedagogical strategies that had informed the curricula of English (boys’) schools for more than a century is discernable here in the adoption of the classical medium of dialogue and in the emphasis placed on the concord of faith and reason.¹⁰ Appropriately monitored writing and study were deemed worthwhile pursuits for the young women of Little Gidding, being both morally instructive and useful for developing practical literacy, which had a range of everyday applications from correspondence to household account-keeping.

However, historians following Turner in the late 1670s have tended to attribute authorship of the dialogues to Nicholas, arguing that the women who recited them did so from memory and had no part in their composition.¹¹ Perhaps they are swayed by John Ferrar’s determination to give witness to his brother’s hand having guided all matters of consequence, including his assertion that “Nicholas Ferrar contrived a book of fitting stories and lessons for the training up of young people” in reference to his provisions for the boys’ schoolroom.¹² Yet there is no evidence in the Ferrar papers or the dialogue texts to suggest that Nicholas did anything other than supervise the storying from time to time.

Despite the long-held assumption that the dialogues are Nicholas Ferrar’s work, it makes sense that the Collet sisters wrote the dialogues themselves. Simple research and composition based upon a controlled body of literature available in the household would likely have been condoned, if not integral to the storying practice as a whole. And as Muir and White attest, though John Ferrar zealously adds credit to his brother in his biography and describes Nicholas’s provisions for the education of the children, in particular the boys, in some detail, nowhere does he mention Nicholas in conjunction with the dialogues. Nicholas took notes when he was present at storying and later transcribed the proceedings, and thus perhaps exercised editorial discretion, but during the Academy’s most active period from 1631-2 he was often absent from Little Gidding.¹³ Five manuscript volumes of

⁹ Feast of the Purification 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.2.

¹⁰ For a parallel argument concerning the continuity of Erasmus’s ideals, including the notion of exemplary lives, transmitted via a rhetorical tradition into English Protestant biography, see Collinson, “A Magazine of Religious Patterns”.

¹¹ Muir & White, *Materials*, p.6.

¹² Ferrar, *Life*, in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.82.

¹³ Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.17-8.

the dialogues are extant, made and bound by the sisters from the transcripts.¹⁴ The first volume was completed by the February 1632 anniversary of the Academy's establishment, when it was presented to Mrs Ferrar, and then was forwarded at her bidding to her granddaughter Susanna Mapletoft at Margaretting.¹⁵

In keeping with the early modern maxim that examples had greater purchase on the imagination than did precepts, the sisters drew vignettes from the store of books in the household (of which no record survives), both relatively recent and from the distant past, which, recounted in turn, illustrated the moral strengths and shortcomings of their protagonists;

good Histories, whereof wee ought not in truth to bee unfurnished, considering the opportunity that GOD hath given us to grow rich in these kind of jewells; for Jewells they are indeed, especially when they are well sett by a gracefull delivery and a seasonable application.¹⁶

A variety of personages from a range of contexts, secular and religious, populates the dialogue transcripts. They included classical heroes such as Trajan and Alexander; an assortment of desert fathers – clear favourites, a source respected by members of Lancelot Andrewes' circle¹⁷ amongst English Protestants and whose example affirmed the wisdom of the Ferrars' project of retirement in particular – and their heathen contemporaries of the Alexandrian patriciate; Bede's early English Christians such as Oswin, King of Northumberland and the bishop Aidan; and fifteenth-, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century figures including Cosimo de' Medici, Popes Marcellus II and Adrian VI, Katherine of Aragon and Maurice of Orange. The presence of tales such as "The Lady of the Lights" suggests that the sisters occasionally dipped into the annals of romance, territory conventionally spurned for its ungodliness (Vives, for example, maintains in this regard "What shulde a mayde do with armour? ... Hit can nat lyghtly be a chaste mynde, that is occupied with thynkyng on armour, and turnay, and mannes valiaunce") and specifically condemned in the storying of 31 December 1631.¹⁸ Themes resounding throughout the

¹⁴ Nicholas Ferrar was not always present to transcribe the dialogues; presumably the sisters worked from their own drafts where his copies were not available.

¹⁵ See the letters of 2 Feb 1632 in Sharland, *Story Books*, pp. liii–liv.

¹⁶ St Stephen 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p. 20.

¹⁷ Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, p. 6.

¹⁸ "The Lady of the Lights", Ash Wednesday 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, pp. 8–9; 31 December 1631, pp. 119–22. Juan Luis Vives, *De Institutione Foeminae Christianae*, 1524, trans. Richard Hyrde as *The Instruction of A Christen Woman*, London, 1529. A digital rendering of Hyrde's 1529 edition together with introductory essays is available from the University of Illinois Press at <http://www.press.uillinois.edu/epub/books/vives/toc.html/>. Quote: "What bokes be to be redde, and what nat. The .v. Chapter." <http://www.press.uillinois.edu/epub/books/vives/ch1.html#1.7> (accessed March 6, 2007). The Ferrars' definition of "chivalrous tales" was capacious; "Virgill and Homere ... Ariosto and Spencer" are reviled in a breath on p. 119. Shortly before his death in 1637, Nicholas Ferrar ordered the immolation of his cache of books, doubtless including romances, on the site where soon he would be

dialogues relate to the central premise that worldly things pale in significance when compared with spiritual concerns; seeking virtue is a matter of immediate consequence, not something easily deferred till later in life, and should include practising temperance, patience, moderation, devotion and resistance to the urges of the “weaker affections”.

Reportedly established at the behest of the participants’ grandmother, Mary Ferrar, on the Feast of the Purification (Candlemas, 2 February) in 1631, the Little Academy operated until 1634. Its core members were the four eldest Collet sisters resident at Little Gidding, Mary, Anna, Hester and Margaret, who performed the majority of the stories and shared responsibility for the functioning of the group. Their ages in 1631 were: Mary, 30 years; Anna, 28 years; Hester, approximately 24 years; and Margaret, approximately 23 years. Two younger sisters, Elizabeth and Joyce, offered shorter stories in keeping with their junior status, despite the fact that at approximately 19 and 16 years of age respectively they would have been completely capable of full participation. Each member of the Academy bore a fixed title and took part in the dialogues under that alias, as if in character. Mary, the eldest and very much the dominant presence among the sisters, was called the “Cheife” and her younger sister Anna was called the “Patient”. Hester and Margaret were the “Cheerefull” and the “Affectionate”, and Elizabeth and Joyce were the “Obedient” and the “Submisse”; it is not clear which sister took which name in either pair. Their sister Susanna Mapletoft was given the honorary title of the “Goodwife”, but living at a distance she did not participate in the storying. The sisters’ grandmother (who made no verbal contribution), their parents Susanna and John Collet, and their uncles John and Nicholas Ferrar all had titles in the Academy – respectively the “Founder” or “Mother”, the “Moderatour”, the “Resolved”, the “Visitour” and the “Guardian”. At least one of them was present at each meeting session, largely in the capacity of commentators and supervisors rather than storytellers, with the exception of Mrs Collet, who presented stories alongside her daughters from time to time. The rationale behind the Academy’s character names is discussed below.

At first envisaged as a daily practice, the Academy soon fell to meeting only during holiday periods (apart from a very busy first summer monopolised by the protracted case

interred; he also made written record of the act from his deathbed. See Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.109-10. Nicholas’s statement disavowing the books is on p.111. Evidently he had expressed his intention to burn the collection, which comprised “many hundreds [of books], in several languages ... comedies, tragedies, love hymns, heroical poems, and such like things” (p.110), much earlier. The Cheife refers to “...that Bone-fire which is resolved, as soone as Conveniency permitts, to be made of all these kinds of Bookes [like Ariosto’s “Orlando”] by our Visitour” in the dialogue of 31 December 1631. Sharland, *Story Books*, p.119.

of Charles V's retirement¹⁹), in particular Christmastide when storying functioned as a godly alternative to the customary gaming and feasting of the season. Sometimes there was a significant degree of congruence between the festival and the lesson behind the stories recited on a given day – the importance of an appropriate disposition towards death was communicated throughout the discussion on Holy Innocents' Day (28 December) 1631, for example.²⁰ But more often than not the connection between the lot or example of the saint nominally being commemorated and the moral of the story was abstruse, and it seems likely that the sisters agreed upon a specific but not directly correlated theme or themes for reflection prior to each dialogue.

During Christmastide 1631 the storying was held upstairs in the "Sisters' Chamber",²¹ presumably one of the "chambers and closets" that Nicholas had provided for his nieces, rather than downstairs in the great chamber where most communal activities such as meals and regular prayer gatherings took place.²² The performance had an audience of "most of the Family", though it is not clear whether an audience was a constant or a prerequisite for storying.²³ The sessions stalled after the 1632 Christmas season, but, following a long hiatus and moved by old Mrs Ferrar's wish to see the Academy active again, the group reconvened in 1634 subsequent to her May death. The transcript of the "Winding Sheet" dialogue then performed – on mortality, in which reference is made also to George Herbert, who had died on 1 March 1633²⁴ – is the last indication of the Academy's activity.²⁵ The precise date of this gathering is difficult to determine; Williams suggests some two years after Christmastide 1632, late in 1634.²⁶ By this reckoning, the active lifespan of the Little Academy was only about two years, from the end of the Christmas season early in 1631 to the end of the Christmas season early in 1633, with one outlying performance towards the end of 1634.

¹⁹ See the first paragraph of St Stephen's 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.19, where the story's omission from the first volume is explained. The dialogue "On the Retirement of Charles V" is printed in Williams, *Conversations*, pp.1-156.

²⁰ Holy Innocents' 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, pp.59-71.

²¹ St John the Evangelist 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.39.

²² Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.82. Blackstone (*Ferrar Papers*, p.100) and Sharland (*Story Books*, title page) claim that the dialogues were held in the great chamber, though no evidence supports their assumption.

²³ St John the Evangelist 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.39

²⁴ "The Winding Sheet" in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.197-8 & note.

²⁵ Williams discusses the chronology of the dialogues in his introduction to *Conversations*, pp.xx-xxxiii. For Mrs Ferrar's exhortation and the resolution to re-establish the dialogues, see "The Winding Sheet" in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.108-9.

²⁶ Williams, *Conversations*, p.xxix.

Why establish the Little Academy? Motivations for the storying and its functions

That Nicholas anticipated the effectiveness of the dialogues as a method of inculcating values, in keeping with pedagogical theories of the time, is one possible explanation for why the Little Academy was set up in the first place. Other factors impinged on its creation too. In establishing the Little Academy the Ferrars were dealing with the problem, in contemporary terms, of having a large number of daughters in the household, most of them awaiting marriage but too old for the schoolroom.²⁷ It was important that they were not idle and that their time was filled with fitting pursuits, both work and structured leisure. In storying, moral and intellectual content were combined with the opportunity to perfect skills of vocal and bodily deportment and decorum, forming an entirely wholesome, improving activity.²⁸ The research and composition process and the careful work of copying and binding the transcripts likewise constituted disciplined, devout uses of time, culminating in a tangible product. It was gender-specific training. The Academy was part of a broader project to prepare the Collet sisters for life as married gentlewomen, but particularly as godly wives.

For it is highly probable that, likely by Nicholas's design, the sisters were raised with a view to their marrying priests, an end which would secure them sound futures in the feminine roles of wife and mother but in circumstances where the religious orientation was perhaps greater than in a lay household of appropriate station. By becoming entrenched in clerical families the young women would stand a better chance of continuing with their lives of pious observance at a pitch approximating that to which they had become accustomed at Little Gidding, thereby individually conveying the Ferrar mission of devout living into the wider world. A seventeenth-century parson's wife had special pastoral and in some cases evangelical responsibilities in the parish, visiting and ministering to the frail and ill, for example, much as the Ferrar women did through the infirmary, soup kitchen and widows' lodgings at Little Gidding. Most significantly, the clerical family was a model to the rest of the community; thus the minister's wife had to embody feminine virtue as an

²⁷ It appears that the younger girls at Little Gidding stopped attending lessons with their brothers, for whom schoolmasters were engaged, around the age of puberty.

²⁸ The dialogue transcripts, however, contain comparatively little reference to the physical aspects of performance, such as gesture, bodily deportment, dance or grace of movement, given the emphasis conventionally accorded them in prescriptions for boys' schooling, for example. Actions of this sort were associated with oratory and commercial theatre; neither were approved activities or occupations for women. According to Ursula Potter, it "would be difficult to overstate the extraordinary value Tudor grammar schools placed on action"; on *chironomia* or "rhetorical dancing", see her "Performing Arts in the Tudor Classroom" in Lloyd Kermode, Jason Scott-Warren & Martine Van Elk (eds), *Tudor Drama Before Shakespeare, 1495-1590: new directions for research, criticism, and pedagogy*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp.152-4 (quote: p.153). See also William H. McCabe, *An Introduction to the Jesuit Theater*, ed. Louis J. Oldani, St Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1983, p.20.

obedient and devout wife and mother, taking care of her children's religious and moral training and maintaining effective government of household and family. A century after the necessity of clerical celibacy was first questioned in the process of the English Reformation, clerical marriage had become an accepted institution, but one only just beginning to establish its respectability. In part this was because many clergymen could not claim any particular wealth or distinction of lineage. For the Ferrar-Collets, the task of finding suitable husbands and providing dowries for so many daughters was a social and financial burden. Clergymen might have lacked gentle birth and money, but with any luck they could boast personal holiness and a university education as standard, and could offer their prospective wives the promise of a godly home and a share in the respect that their position earned them in the neighbourhood. Perhaps these benefits would offset their shortcomings, in the long term paving the way for clergymen to become eligible partners for gentlewomen. But the centuries-old stigma attached to 'priests' whores' was slow to dissipate in the (relatively) newly Protestant nation, and as a consequence there was considerable pressure upon clergy wives of the early Stuart period to demonstrate scrupulous feminine conduct and to establish the social cachet of their families.

The degree to which women who married clerics in the Elizabethan and early Stuart era were moulding a new social role and the possibility that they experienced empowerment in the process of doing so merits further research, but is beyond the scope of the present discussion. However, it is worth considering whether, having priest-husbands identified as their future goal, a sort of anticipatory marital relationship was established through the Collet sisters' relationships with their unmarried uncle, Nicholas Ferrar. The devout deacon so revered in the household was also its head and was central to the sisters' spiritual formation, maintaining close individual bonds with his nieces. Perhaps Nicholas was, as it were, a sort of proto-husband, not quite a husband, not quite a father, and not quite a priest, who was only properly displaced when the sisters married other men. In this case, conditioned to be receptive to and respectful of their godly profession and consequent authority, the girls could have developed an emotional inclination towards clerics. The proximity of their ages should be borne in mind also when considering the nature of the extremely close relationships, however chastely sublimated, that Nicholas pursued with his nieces, in particular with his favourites, Mary and Anna. Nicholas was 38 in 1631 when the Academy was founded, and Mary and Anna were respectively 30 and 28 years old. By July of that year Anna had sought the approval of Nicholas and their parents to spend the rest of her life unmarried, as Mary had done somewhat earlier. While Nicholas's support of Anna in her resistance to repeated attempts to marry her to Arthur Woodnoth (the kinsman and London goldsmith who acted as the Ferrars' city agent, then

aged about forty) does not prove a countervailing attachment between them, it does suggest sympathy, and the letters between Anna and Nicholas, like those between Mary and Nicholas, testify to their psychological intimacy and his encouragement of both in their decision to live as celibates.²⁹

Regardless of whether the Collet sisters married laymen or ministers, the Little Academy was designed to address their particular needs as women according to notions of what was proper for their present and future conduct, and bearing in mind the weaknesses generally associated with being female. It was characterised as a feminine institution from the outset.

It was the same Day wherein the Church celebrates that great Festivall of the Purification, that the Mayden Sisters, longing to bee Imitatours of those glorious Saints by whose Names they were called (for all bare Saints Names, and shee that was elected CHEIFE, that of Blessed Virgin Mary) having entered into a joint Covenant betweene themselves and some others of neerest Blood ... for the performance of divers religious exercises ... they therefore resolved, together with the Practize of Devotion, to intermingle the study of wisdom, searching and enquiring diligently into the knowledge of those things which appertaine to their Condition and Sex.³⁰

It was not true that “all bare Saints Names”, however, unless a general sainthood of all the godly was implied: Hester, the Biblical queen, and Joyce are the obvious outliers.

Founded according to the will of the matriarch, Mary Ferrar, to whom the dialogue transcripts are dedicated, it was hardly coincidental the inaugural session of the Little Academy was held on the Feast of the Purification, 2 February 1631. By that date, the Ferrars would have been quite settled at Little Gidding, having first arrived there in May 1625, and all of the Collet sisters then involved with the Academy over the age of 14 – roughly the point at which young gentlewomen would conventionally have been considered mature or at least too old for school. The Marian connotations were explicit, and consequence was attributed to the other female saints’ names with which the Collet sisters were christened, including Anna and Elizabeth. Furthermore, as has been noted, the participants assumed names representing desirable feminine character traits. The object of these sobriquets was to identify a quality in which each was lacking but to which she was particularly enjoined to aspire, according to her personality and her role in the household. As the girls’ mother Susanna Collet, the Moderatour, stated: “There’s none here perhaps answeres to their Names as an expression of their Natures, or Conditions; but as a testimonie of their desires & endeavours, that they would faine bee such as they are called.”

²⁹ These relationships are considered further in chapter 6.

³⁰ Feast of the Purification 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.2.

“Alas, then,” said her husband John, the Guardian, of one of their daughters, probably Joyce, “...I perceive this Lovely Name is not imposed on our Submissee for desert; but Instruction to teach her, what shee ought to bee, rather then to tell others what shee is.”³¹ The titles were exhortatory rather than complimentary, although given her prominent role in the family and the respect with which she was generally held, the Chiefe seems to have been an epithet Mary Collet properly deserved.

“Finding in themselves, and observing in others that doe sincerely pursue virtue, that the greatest barre of Perfection was Ignorance of the truth”³², it behoved them to settle on a path of study, but of course only where the matter was reckoned fitting for women’s consumption and restricted to examples that might cultivate virtues which they were typically deemed to lack. The circumscription of women’s reading material was customary, particularly in the context of their education. Authors of prescriptive texts recommended suitable reading, such as the heading on books for young women to read during their formative years that Juan Luis Vives included in *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*. Vives condemned romance and the profane poetry of the Greeks and Romans, in particular unchaste amorous verse, and endorsed Biblical and patristic reading as well as select classical authors such as Plato, Seneca, and Cicero.³³ The dialogues of the Academy bear out similar priorities in the Collet sisters’ reading. In general, poetry and plays are eschewed and factual works such as histories are favoured.

In their dedicatory epistle to the transcripts of the dialogues, Mary and Anna Collet describe their purpose as follows: “that whereunto this particular exercise is chiefly intended: the Discoverie of those false Opinions wherewith the world misleads all Mankind, especially our weaker sex”.³⁴ They set up a clear opposition between the snares and evils of worldly concerns and the goodness of spiritual things, citing their grandmother’s conduct as their model in the pursuit of virtue, stating: “You have forsaken all those Affections, Imploiments, and Delights, wherein the world perswades the cheif content of womens minds should ly, and you have censured them as vanities at the best, as sins and great ones, as they are commonly pursued.” They credit Mary Ferrar with suggesting and sanctioning this means of studying virtue within the context of the household regimen, but also attribute to her their very capacity to undertake this rational

³¹ “On The Retirement of Charles V” in Williams, *Conversations*, p.136 and quoted by him on p.xxxiii. In the footnote to the dialogue text (n.1, p.137) Williams identifies the Submissee as Judith Collet, whereas the Submissee is Joyce Collet in his introduction (p.xxxiii). Joyce or her sister Elizabeth must have been the Submissee, as Judith was born in 1624 and therefore would have been too young to participate in the dialogues.

³² Feast of the Purification 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.2.

³³ Vives, *Christen Woman*, trans. Hyrde, <http://www.press.uillinois.edu/epub/books/vives/ch1.html#1.7> (accessed March 6, 2007).

³⁴ Mary and Anna Collet, dedicatory epistle in Sharland, *Story Books*, p.lii.

endeavour. They refer to intellect almost as if it were a simple matter of biological inheritance, helping them to strive after that which is good as much as the moral conditioning which took place in the godly environment that their grandmother fostered.

The significance of matriarchy in the Ferrar family was complicated. The opening line of John Ferrar's biography of his brother Nicholas reads: "Nicholas Ferrar's mother was of the ancient Cheshire family of the Woodnoths of Shavinton ..." and continues with a substantial excursus on her exceptional qualities both of body and character before moving to a description of her husband, Nicholas Ferrar sen.. The distinction of her gentle blood was a valuable source of establishment identity for the family; Mary Woodnoth Ferrar's husband was, after all, only a Hertford draper's son who had found fortune trading in London. Though practical control of the household rested in her son Nicholas's hands, while Mrs Ferrar was alive the rituals of daily life at Little Gidding revolved around her symbolic seniority, as both embodiment and emblem of family heritage and order. Each day she sat enthroned as overseer of her grandchildren's education and play in the great hall, a beneficent but revered presence, a constant symbol of lineage and feminine virtue imprinting on the minds of the next generation, and the figurehead of a household dominated at least numerically by females.

The old gentlewoman set herself down in her chair and this was her constant place; some or other of her daughters or her grandchildren were always there. Some too young to go to school sat there in great silence either at their books or otherwise, and the elder, some to their needleworks, others to learn what they were to say next day.³⁵

Her grand-daughters were not alone in remarking on her outstanding mental acumen and virtue. Augustine Lindsell, bishop of Hereford and earlier Nicholas' tutor at Clare "would say of her, that he knew no woman that passed her in eloquency (which was natural to her), in judgment and in wisdom, as he did ever admire her, and for her devotion towards God".³⁶ Were acclaim from such an elevated personage promoted in the household, it would surely have added to the sisters' respect for the matriarch. It is significant, too, that her intellect is mentioned before her piety, and represented as 'naturally' compatible with it.

Given the main purpose of the dialogues was to edify the young female participants, there is a preponderance of male exemplars in the stories. Notwithstanding the Marian connotations evoked in the Academy's opening session, there are few female role models, not even Biblical ones, and moreover the women who do feature are generally in situations quite divorced from that of the Collet sisters, not only in time and place but

³⁵ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.82-3.

³⁶ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.41.

also in condition of life and virtue. The sisters had little in common with the pagan harlots whose stories they read, fallen women who came to God through encounters with hermits. In contrast, comparable early-modern prescriptive literature abounds with references to virtuous women: “the fortitude and wifely faithfulness of Penelope and the patience of Griselda ... the helping Lydia, the chaste Susannah, the judicious Deborah, the housewifely Martha, the pious Mary, sister of Martha, the steadfast Mary Magdalene and, above all, the Blessed Virgin Mary”.³⁷ Why did they not appear in the Little Academy’s stories?

The predominance of male role models both historical and legendary in the literature from which the Collet sisters worked is a likely explanation; the notion that exceptional behaviour was less to be expected from women with their intrinsic inclination towards weakness and error was powerful. The surrender of public engagement in favour of a life of pious retirement, a theme most relevant to the Ferrar-Collet family, was also a more remarkable and arguably a more difficult choice for men, and thus the individuals recorded as exemplars of renunciation were especially likely to be male. (Perhaps too this suggests that the presence of an audience of mixed gender was an important part of the dialogues’ edifying function.) More simply, the sisters might have found the exploits and praiseworthy acts of distinguished men of greater interest than the available cases of feminine virtue.

Mary Ferrar resigned her position as convenor of the Little Academy on St Luke’s Day, 18 October 1632, pleading her advanced age (she was about 78 years old) and illness. The members of the group debated who should be installed in her stead. They chose Mary Collet and installed her with great ceremony as the new Mother on 1 November 1632.³⁸ The following assertion, made by the Affectionate, is the most noteworthy statement of the sisters’ rationale in the debate:

“So it may serve to our own purpose, it little matters what others censure (sayd the Affectionate). Wee are too farre already engaged to have the worlds good word, and therefore I think it great Folly for feare or satisfaction of men to turn back to that which may lead us on the better to GOD. Wherefore I beseech you, without giving way to further traverse of this business, to goe immediately to the choise, not of a Lord, but of a Lady; for so you have resolved, and so the constitution of our Family requires, it being the woman sex that exceeds both in Number and faultines amongst us.”³⁹

As contrived as the record of the deliberations concerning the appointment of the leader may be, the passage is revealing insofar as it betrays anxiety surrounding their female-led

³⁷ Charlton, *Women, Religion and Education*, p.96.

³⁸ For the description of the installation ritual: All Saints’ 1632, Sharland, *Story Books*, pp.173-84.

³⁹ St Luke 1632, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.163.

practices, in spite of the celebratory matriarchal rhetoric demonstrated at other points, such as in the dedicatory letters to the volume of dialogues. The Affectionate's statement shows that the assumption of women's particular inclination to sin, current in the family, was a reason for instituting measures for their education (or at the very least a means of justifying their more intellectual endeavours). Her assertion is an indication, unparalleled in its frankness, both of the state of the family and the purpose of the Little Academy.

Storying was meant to be enjoyable as well as morally instructive, nonetheless, and as such it offered an alternative to the fleshly indulgence that was a part of many conventional forms of leisure and celebration. The Little Academy's role at Christmastime is a case in point. In 1631 old Mrs Ferrar imposed a ban on customary festivities such as card-playing and feasting in favour of more solemn observance and, according to the Cheife, charged the Academy with the "hard task" of "mak[ing] it a merry and true Christmas, both together, to your household by delightfull and vertuous exercises, that they should have no Cause to envy others greater Liberty or better Cheere".⁴⁰ The Cheerefull called for a similarly ascetic Christmas in Advent 1632, and summoned a meeting of the Academy during which temperance and corporal denial were discussed.⁴¹

Performance, entertainment and education: the Little Academy in context

Enthusiasm for theatre and display in the early Stuart period was matched by reservation and outright hostility, and the matter of women appearing onstage incited particular controversy. The participation of high-ranking women in festive masques held at court and in the private households of the affluent met with the censure of theatre-detractors such as William Prynne and William Ames.⁴² In his colossal jeremiad *Histrion-Mastix*, published in 1632, shortly after the inception of the Little Academy, Prynne famously branded all "women actors, notorious whores". By allegedly levelling the indictment at Henrietta Maria, who was rehearsing a production at the time, he forfeited to the king his legal career, his liberty and the tops of his ears, amongst other privileges.⁴³ Ames's reproachful gaze meanwhile comprehended acting and play-going, Christmas festivities, gaming, drinking, oaths and myriad other transgressions. Yet the existence of the Little Academy would seem

⁴⁰ St Stephen 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.19.

⁴¹ "On the Austere Life" in Williams, *Conversations*, pp.159-315; see also Williams' Introduction, pp.xxviii-xxix.

⁴² Edmund S. Morgan, "Puritan Hostility to the Theatre", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 110:5 (Oct. 1966), pp.340-347, is the seminal work on anti-theatrical sentiment in Elizabethan and early Stuart England.

⁴³ William Prynne, *Histrion-Mastix: The Player's Scourge; or, Actor's Tragedy*, London: printed for Michael Sparke, 1633 [i.e. 1632].

to demonstrate that the godly Ferrars approved of acting and performance in an edificatory context, unlike some other pious parties. It is worth considering, then, historical and contemporary examples of the use of drama and performance for didactic purposes, before assessing whether indeed the Ferrars regarded the dialogues to be dramatic or theatrical, and how the function of entertainment related to that of instruction.

Ample precedent was available for reference should the Ferrars have needed to justify the existence of the Little Academy. Comparable applications of performance to those of the Little Academy are identifiable in boys' education in early modern England and in contemporary European institutions. The use of drama as a didactic tool in western culture is ancient. More particularly, the familiar Socratic mode of the dialogue, turning on the model of the witty sage engaging in conversation with a naïve interlocutor (or interlocutors) from whom rational insights are coaxed progressively, has continued effectively unbroken since Plato's adoption of the form as the basis of philosophical practice.⁴⁴ The use of drama and dialogue in schools was strengthened in the early modern era through the advocacy of humanist educators such as Erasmus and Vives. Erasmus believed in the value of drama as an educational tool and embedded this principle in his programme for St Paul's School, which influenced the curricula of grammar schools throughout the realm.⁴⁵ Drama helped to develop the skills of oratory that were prioritised as training for men's public and professional roles, not least amongst these clerical office, in the classical model.⁴⁶ It may be presumed that their tutor incorporated oratory into the boys' "schooling and learning the Latin tongue" at Little Gidding.⁴⁷ It is not surprising that Latin oratory does not appear to have figured in the programme of their sisters, given a culture that prescribed and to some extent enforced feminine silence in public, and in which women were barred from oratorical employment in pulpit, parliament and courtroom as well as on stage. For girls and for the majority of English boys who did not have the privilege of attending grammar school, dialogue would have been most recognisable from the question-and-answer format of the prayer book's catechesis.⁴⁸ Yet it

⁴⁴ See for example Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; Francisco J. Gonzalez, *Dialectic and Dialogue: Plato's Practice of Philosophical Inquiry*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998.

⁴⁵ Potter, "Performing Arts", p.144.

⁴⁶ On school drama, see Ursula Potter, "Pedagogy and Parenting in English Drama, 1560-1610: Flogging Schoolmasters and Cockering Mothers", unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2001, available at <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/356> (accessed July 6, 2006).

⁴⁷ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.82.

⁴⁸ A catechism was attached to the order for confirmation from the first edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549) and an extended version remained a feature of the 1662 prayer book. Ian Green's three-part study is the definitive work on catechesis and education in the Protestant faith in England following the Reformation: *'The Christian's ABC': Catechisms and Catechizing in England c.1530-1730*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996; *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000; *Word, Image and Ritual*:

is still possible that Nicholas Ferrar had participated in dramatic activities during his own schooling (or at university) and promoted the concept amongst his nieces.

In European schools, humanist drama designed to teach as well as to delight “was sufficiently established by the start of the sixteenth century for there to be at hand a valuable instrument for the spread of the ideas of the Reformation.”⁴⁹ Similarly, by the seventeenth century, playing was entrenched as a pastime for enclosed nuns and a feature of boys’ schooling in Catholic Europe, and growing in its missions and colonies. Despite the mixed responses and monitoring activities of ecclesiastical authorities who imposed regulations governing the conduct of devotional plays and intermittently objected to various aspects of the practice – for example, they were keen to see that sisters did not grow their hair for playing female parts and did not wear secular costumes for performing, in particular men’s clothes – drama subsisted even in the strict environs of the post-Tridentine cloister.⁵⁰ The Jesuits utilised drama in boys’ schooling and in the training of recruits to the Society. Role-playing, projecting into Biblical episodes or into hypothetical situations with which a contemporary religious might meet worked as an engaging preparation for ministry and, bolstered by the immediacy of drama, rendered it an effective means of fostering mission in men’s orders.⁵¹ Many scholars have attested to the spectacular quality of various rituals of Catholic observance, and worship of this kind as well as plays reinforced the impassioned, demonstrative and affective quality of Counter-Reformation devotion.

A few notable exceptions to the general pattern of excluding girls from dramatic activities in early modern England exist which may be compared with the Little Academy. At court and in the relative confinement of aristocratic households, girls and women sometimes participated in masques, though entertainments of this order were probably beyond the capacity of most gentry hosts.⁵² Alice Egerton, the younger daughter of the earl of Bridgewater, performed alongside her younger brothers, John, Lord Brackley, aged 11, and Thomas, aged nine, in the production of Milton’s *Comus* (correctly *A Mask Presented at Ludlow Castle*) at Michaelmas (29 September) 1634 in honour of her father’s appointment as

Protestant Instruction in Early Modern England (provisional title), Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming. On catechesis as a method of religious education, see Charlton, *Women, Religion and Education*, pp.89-92.

⁴⁹ John Warrack, *German Opera: from the Beginnings to Wagner*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.4.

⁵⁰ Elissa B. Weaver, *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.54-5.

⁵¹ On Jesuit drama: McCabe, *Introduction to Jesuit Theater*. For a fascinating study of “autodidactic drama” in Jesuit education, the power of performance in stirring up devotion in young people, and the role of children or youths as exemplary figures, see Alison Shell, “‘Furor juvenilis’: post-Reformation English Catholicism and exemplary youthful behaviour” in *Catholics and the ‘Protestant Nation’*, ed. Ethan Shagan, Manchester & New York: University of Manchester Press, 2005, pp.185-206.

⁵² Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, p.294.

Lord President of Wales. Alice was 15 years old at the time, and the play dwelt upon the chastity of Alice's character, "the Lady". An important virtue for any nubile female, Alice's chastity had to be underscored owing to the scandal that had erupted in 1631 when the details of the trial for sexual misconduct of her uncle-by-marriage, the earl of Castelhaven, had become public. If a good marriage was to be made for Alice, it was necessary to distance her at any cost from the taint of incest in the Egerton family and from association with the socially-degraded status of her kinswomen who had suffered sexual violence at Touchet's hand.⁵³ Around this date, Alice and some of her relatives also took part in another masque by Milton, *Arcades*, which was addressed to her namesake grandmother, Alice Spencer Egerton, the Dowager Countess of Darby. In early 1632, she had performed in at least one other masque, Aurelian Townshend's *Tempe Restored*, which Henrietta Maria and her ladies in waiting staged at Whitehall for Shrove Tuesday (14 February).⁵⁴

As far as school dramatics are concerned, the case of some pupils from Ladies Hall in Deptford who appeared in Robert White's masque *Cupid's Banishment* is outstanding. Probably cast as the eight singing wood-nymphs attendant on Diana, their performance in front of Anne of Denmark at court at Greenwich in 1617 was sponsored by Lucy Russell (née Harington), countess of Bedford, a renowned patron of the arts and even with her godly convictions a keen participant in masques.⁵⁵ In contrast, it is most likely that the Ferrars would have looked askance at these exuberant spectacles; their storying involved nothing like the costumes, dancing and stage machinery of the masques.

The Collet sisters in the Little Academy were already very much 'of age' and their storying had little in common with the masque's voluptuous "celebration of the development of the girls of Ladies Hall into graceful and worthy young women".⁵⁶ They were not at school, and their household was far removed in substance and spirit from the opulent and theatrical domesticity of great noble families. In terms of the underlying seriousness of the storying, its edificatory ends and factual content, more appropriate

⁵³ For a superlative analysis of the Castlehaven affair see Cynthia B. Herrup's *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the Second Earl of Castlehaven*, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

⁵⁴ Henrietta Maria had first performed alongside other ladies in entertainments at the court of her mother, Marie de Medicis, in France. On this inheritance and on *Tempe Restored*, see Melinda J. Gough, "Not as myself: The Queen's Voice in *Tempe Restored*", *Modern Philology* 101:1 (Aug 2003), pp.48-67. For a recent study of Henrietta Maria's cultural patronage, see Karen Britland, *Drama at the Courts of Queen Henrietta Maria*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006; *Tempe Restored* is discussed in chapter 6. See also Sophie Tomlinson, *Women on Stage in Stuart Drama*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

⁵⁵ Robert White, *Cupid's Banishment: A Masque Presented to Her Majesty by the Young Gentlewomen of the Ladies Hall, Deptford, May 4, 1617*, ed. & intro. C.E. McGee, *Renaissance Drama*, n.s., 19 (1988), pp.227-64. Cf. I.A. Shapiro, who suggests that "Ladies Hall" refers to the accommodations of the younger gentlewomen who attended the great ladies of the queen's entourage, not an independent school, and thus the players in *Cupid's Banishment* were young ladies-in-waiting. Letter to the editor, *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 21:84 (Nov. 1970), pp.472-3.

⁵⁶ McGee, Introduction to "*Cupid's Banishment*", pp.228-9. The masque's conventional veneration of chaste love celebrated the girls' readiness for marriage, implying sexual maturity and invoking the managed conjugal sexuality supposedly epitomised by the royal couple.

parallels might be found in Lettice Cary's pedagogical designs for women in the learned but deeply pious conformist environs of Great Tew.⁵⁷ In its ideals, The Academy perhaps came close to prefiguring developments of the later seventeenth century, such as Mary Astell's *Serious Proposal* for a "Monastery" for women's devotion and study, or Bathsua Makin's principles of female education.⁵⁸ Yet it was not as liberal as these institutions, much less the site of rationalist female conversation envisaged by Judith Drake.⁵⁹ Neither, it seems, was it designed by the Collet women. At Little Gidding, religious endeavour ultimately outweighed intellectual enquiry. The sisters were engaged in a structured, corporate routine by which, above all, each learned how to behave as a godly woman should and how to effect her own and her family's spiritual improvement.

Although the participatory and cerebral nature of dialogues might discline a reader of the transcripts to classify them as dramatic performances, there was clearly a performative aspect (beyond that of collective role-playing) to the storying. The Collet sisters clearly understood themselves to be acting: "Weele now come downe to the representment of some of those things in Actions which you have heard of in the Abstract" said the Cheerefull, having completed a lengthy Scriptural prologue to the storying.⁶⁰ They usually performed before a small, variable audience of non-participant family members. The attendance of an audience meant the dialogues could be conceived of as having a didactic function that extended beyond the experience of Academy members alone. It was also a measure of transparency, invoking the sanction and endorsement implicit in supervision by uninvolved observers.

Further, the transcripts reflect the sense of occasion that surrounded dialogue sessions, consistent with their taking place on holidays. The report of the enthusiastic, unusually large gathering on St John the Evangelist's Day (27 December) in 1631 following the previous day's storying suggests that the performances excited the attendees to anticipation, despite the fact of the obvious vindictory construction of the account: using the family member's eager enjoyment of the dialogues to reassert the legitimacy of the practice and the claim to its efficacy as a means of moral instruction.

⁵⁷ On Lettice, Lady Falkland's idea for a "female retreat", see Bridget Hill, "A Refuge from Men: The Idea of a Protestant Nunnery", *Past & Present* 117 (Nov 1987), pp.111-12. For Hill's comments on Little Gidding, see pp.110-11. For the Great Tew Circle, see Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans: Seventeenth-Century Essays*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1987, pp.166-230.

⁵⁸ [Mary Astell], *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, London: printed for R. Wilkins, 1694. [Bathsua Makin], *An essay to revive the antient education of gentlewomen in religion, manners, arts and tongues...*, London: printed by J.D. to be sold by Thos. Parkhurst, 1673. For 'feminist' ideas concerning women and education in England during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, see Hannah Smith, "English 'Feminist' Writings and Judith Drake's *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (1696)", *Historical Journal* 44:3 (Sep 2001), pp.727-47.

⁵⁹ Judith Drake, *An essay in defence of the female sex*, London: printed for A. Roper & E. Wilkinson, 1696.

⁶⁰ St John the Evangelist 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.44.

The Remembrance of the former Daies Pleasure having after a quicker dispatch then ordinary, though of extraordinary cheere, carried up most of the Family to the SISTERS Chamber, the GUARDIAN, seeing unusuall Lonelines in the Dining Roome, himselfe onely and one or two more being left, smilingly sayd to his MOTHER that it might well now bee seene that there is as great delight to bee found in good things and profitable as in pernicious Vanities. For I doe not think any Gamesters within twenty Miles more egerly bent upon their Play then our Family on their Stories.⁶¹

The description also communicates a sense of the immediacy of spectacle. The “Company” were busily recounting the stories of the day before, “sharpening their Appetites for that they were to hear”, when the sisters “instantly appeared” and the Cheerefull began to sing.⁶²

Musical interludes are noted occasionally too, and these, together with the inclusion of the sort of dramatic entrances and pauses that can best be likened to stage tropes rather than rhetorical or oratorical strategies, must have added to the sense of performance.⁶³ The Cheife concluded her Ash Wednesday 1631 tale of Pirrhus and Cineas with a pause, as follows, adding gravity to the ultimate statement of the moral of the story and enabling her to exploit the modesty topos, conventional etiquette for cognoscenti and a frequent recourse of women writers but especially important in this context where women perform, and moreover perform in such a way that demonstrates their knowledge. She sustains what must inevitably be a delicate balancing act:

“If it will be honourable and good in our gray haire, how much more now in youth, to bee wise and virtuous?”
Here the CHEIFE stayd, and having for a good space sett her eies on the ground, at last with a cheerefull eie viewing the Company round about – Your thoughtfull Countenances (sayd shee) give Testimony that I have sayd too much, and perhaps in other manner then I ought, and therefore I will no further increase your wearinesse or my owne fault.⁶⁴

Learning to play and sing were amongst the activities allotted time in the daily schedule at Little Gidding, and a letter records the purchase of an organ, but it is only in the Little Academy transcripts that the presence of a music master in the household is revealed. “[T]he Master of their Musique played on the Vyoll” whilst the Cheife sang a hymn as a prelude to the St Stephen’s Day storying in 1631. The song, it seems, was intended to evoke a sense of solemnity and settle the holiday audience, “refreshing to the

⁶¹ St John the Evangelist 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.39. The church at Little Gidding is dedicated to St John the Evangelist, so it is possible that the feast was one of particular consequence for the family.

⁶² St John the Evangelist 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.39.

⁶³ The distinction may be quibbling: Andrew Gurr argues that in “the sixteenth century the term ‘acting’ was originally used to describe the ‘action’ of the orator, his art of gesture. What the common stages offered was ‘playing’.” *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*, 3rd edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.99.

⁶⁴ Ash Wednesday 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.6.

Memories the ground of this Daies solemnity”.⁶⁵ Similarly, the Cheerefull, “to whom the Guidance of that Day fell, made an enterance by singing” a hymn to the accompaniment of the viol to open proceedings the following day, again as a way of inclining the audience to a holy attitude.⁶⁶ Most sessions include at least one song or hymn (the absence of the music master and therefore the music is sufficiently unusual to be noted on 31 December 1631⁶⁷), generally early on as a means of introducing the day’s theme. Sometimes the exposition is framed with music: the dialogue of 29 December 1631 on the question of the afterlife opens with a song by the Submissee and ends with one by the Obedient, “excusing [them] for the stories which they otherwise were bound to have told.”⁶⁸ Songs therefore could be substituted for the standard moral tales.

The dialogues pursued by the young women of the Little Academy bear a strong relation in style and functions to the practices of storytelling and Scriptural reading at Little Gidding. Storying complemented and in some regards echoed the conventional public, locutionary aspects of their communal religious observance. Every morning “each person (the sons and daughters of the family) according to their ages and discretions repeated to him [Nicholas] what chapters and psalms they had learned without book”⁶⁹ that week. Ritualised reading of Scripture aloud featured at various points in the working day and during meals on Sundays.⁷⁰ “While they were thus in feeding their bodies” the children took turns “to read a chapter in the Bible ... that so also their ears and hearts might not want the best spiritual food”.⁷¹ On weekdays “the two younger daughters and four boys” read “either some chronicles of nations, journeys by land, sea voyages and the like ... because the minds then being in most men altogether intent upon the refreshment of their bodies doth not willingly admit any serious speculation, it is thought fitting that the reading shall be always of some easy and delightful matters”.⁷² The meal over, a further story set by Nicholas would be told “without book” by one of the boys.

They were short, pleasant, and profitable, good language and no less good in matter, teaching them something of worth, exciting to virtue and the hatred of vice, and by this the young ones learned to speak gracefully and courageously.⁷³

⁶⁵ St Stephen 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, pp.20-21.

⁶⁶ St John the Evangelist 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.39.

⁶⁷ 31 Dec 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.103.

⁶⁸ 29 Dec 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, pp.72-3, 88-9.

⁶⁹ Ferrar, *Life*, in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.70, 75. Contemporary educationalists stressed the importance of memorizing texts, particularly in learning religion; for example John Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius: or, The grammar schoole* ..., London: [printed by Humphrey Lownes] for Thomas Man, 1612, described by Rosemary O’Day in her *Education and Society, 1500-1800: The Social Foundations of Education in Early Modern Britain*, London and New York: Longman, 1982, p.51.

⁷⁰ For example, reading from the Gospel concordance. Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.76, 81.

⁷¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.73.

⁷² Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.83-4.

⁷³ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.84.

Just as transcripts were made of the Academy's dialogues, a "summary collection" of the most salient details of the children's stories was prepared. A schoolmaster kept notes from which a fair copy was written by one of the children then reviewed after the midday meal, much as the dialogue transcripts Nicholas took were copied and gathered into volumes by the participating sisters. John Ferrar described the process as constituting "exercises" made under the supervision of "directors" (himself and Mary Collet), indicating unmistakably that it was understood to be an educational activity.⁷⁴ The ends of Scripture readings, mealtime stories and the Academy's dialogues alike were moral edification and entertainment, and further, building conversancy with the events of the world's history.

Apart from providing diversion for those at table, an opportunity to practise public speaking, and a deterrent to idle conversation, storytelling was a means of informing the secluded family about the concerns of the wider world.

And by this means it so came to pass that, though they seemed to live privately and had not much commerce with people, yet they were well acquainted with the forme and latter passages of the world and what was done in it at home and abroad, and had gained knowledge of many actions of note and passages of consequence, and the manners of other countries and nations, and affairs of their own country.⁷⁵

Yet, as has been stated, the rejection of worldly things is a core motif of the dialogues. The purpose of the storying of Holy Innocents' Day 1631, for example, on mortality, was

by representing Death on the stage in his owne dreadfulness, to perswade you to make timely provision for his entertainment; and by representing the world on the other side in its owne Nakednes to withdraw you from further lose of Time and paines in the pursuit thereof: since, however largely the world promiseth, you shall clearely see it is not able to performe anything touching that content which you seek after.⁷⁶

A preoccupation with death and renunciation makes sense given the reasonably heavy mortality that corresponded with the Collets' and Ferrars' high fertility; most family members would have been bereaved of relatives, especially children or siblings, and acquaintances. The impression of recent deaths is discernable in some of the stories too; for example, as mentioned previously, Mary Ferrar and George Herbert are remembered in the "Winding Sheet" dialogue. In addition, substantial weight was placed upon preparing

⁷⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.84.

⁷⁵ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.84.

⁷⁶ Holy Innocents' 1631, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.61.

for a good death in early modern Protestant culture.⁷⁷ Talking about mortality, self-denial, and the superiority of spiritual things reflected their conscientious piety, and in itself constituted a pious practice (which is not to say their concerns were insincere). The Little Academy was a venue in which the Collet sisters examined and confirmed the theory of devout living, but simply doing so was also a pious act.

Why did the Ferrars seek to acquaint themselves and their children with terrestrial matters then, given their retirement and their declared contempt for material existence? Notwithstanding their godly ideals, a practical perspective governed their preparation for present and future social interaction. The sons and daughters of Little Gidding were raised in the expectation of entering the world, taking up professions and/or getting married according to gender. Maintaining connections with kin, friends and acquaintances such as former business associates was necessary to safeguard the immediate material interests of the household and facilitated the negotiation of good marriages for their children and the placement of sons in apprenticeship or employment, for example. Knowledge *per se* was not shunned, consistent with their humanist-influenced Protestant, gentry beliefs in the value of education and civic responsibility, no doubt inflected with the pragmatic spirit of enterprise. A corresponding regard for moderation is plausible too. Sons in particular would be better equipped to succeed in business, scholarship or in the King's service as churchmen or in public life if they were familiar with historical and contemporary events; better officers of patriarchy. And regardless of sex, learning about the righteousness and the folly of humanity through such examples helped to hone the moral sense and ideally could lead individuals towards a state of humble wisdom, and responsibility. They would be fitter parents, set to impart values to the next generation (mothers, after all, were responsible for their children's religious education and the formation of their characters), all the while putting their trust in redemption. Commerce with the world could be avoided only temporarily; a thorough drilling in avoiding its snares and a conscientious frame of mind would equip them for the encounter.

Bearing the vindictory force of precedent and principle in mind then, to understand why storying was deemed appropriate for the young women of Little Gidding it is also necessary to recognise that the context in which the dialogues were performed was controlled in a number of important ways. They took place in the confines of the household, and there is no evidence to suggest that the performance ever transgressed this space. No record exists of playing in front of an audience of anyone other than family members, and even amongst the sisters, participation in the dialogue circle was restricted to

⁷⁷ As noted previously, this is examined in the first three essays in Houlbrooke (ed.), *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement*, especially chapter 2: Beier, "The good death in seventeenth-century England".

those deemed sufficiently mature.⁷⁸ The dialogues were always superintended by adults, parental figures, and intermittently subject to auditing by Nicholas Ferrar, the self-styled ‘Visitour’ of the Little Academy. Further, the dialogues took place in a festive space. Construed as a special occasion within the household and with pleasure an intended outcome, it may be argued that anything untoward that emerged in the goings on would have been safely encapsulated in these exceptional circumstances. So in spite *and* because of being constructed as a space for leisure, rather than offering intermittent respite from the unrelenting mutual checking and regulation of self that the Ferrar household regimen encouraged, the Little Academy was another site of moral regulation and control, its idiosyncratic format and the participants’ opportunities for enjoyment notwithstanding.

The dialogues were a process of learning to know the enemy. In a paradoxical turn, the company of sisters staged the world, letting it into the confines of the godly household by relating and re-enacting episodes from history. Through interpreting the stories and assimilating the lessons drawn from them, the sisters persuaded themselves and their audience to renounce the world, to shut it out again: at least its corrupting aspects, and at least in principle. For the rest, they learned from the examples of the righteous how to endure its perils and temptations. Storying was a process through which the young women had leave to experiment with knowledge and performance that was nevertheless controlled and contained. They researched, composed and presented the dialogues when scholarly reading and writing (moreover in a classical mode) and performance were still regarded as being properly the business of men. But they did so only with the approbation of their same-gender patron, the matriarch of the family, the young women organised hierarchically, labelled according to the qualities they lacked, and whilst supervised by members of their parents’ generation, including adult men. The storying was a very effective means of reinforcing in them the precepts of their Protestant culture, in accordance with their gender and social rank, which were doubtless familiar from childhood and now nuanced consistent with the prioritisation of piety at Little Gidding. It was fundamentally conservative. As the Affectionate put it,

Wee are necessitated to be better then ordinarily Christians are, or els our case wilbe farre worse, in that wee know the way and the reward of welldoing; of both which points, as far as I can perceive, the world is utterly ignorant. If our stories be right, the practize of the world is very wrong.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ The exception to the rule was the Humble, Nan Mapletoft, who was initiated into the Academy as the seventh “daughter” of Mary Collet on 1 November 1632. See: All Saints’ 1632, Sharland, *Story Books*, pp.181-2. Nan cannot have been more than four at this time; her parents, Susanna Collet and Joshua Mapletoft, having married in 1628 (see Appendix A).

⁷⁹ St Andrew 1632, Sharland, *Story Books*, p.243.

Finally, it is reasonable to surmise that a desirable consequence of the Academy's operation was developing the habit of mutual moral policing amongst participants in the dialogues, in keeping with the family rhetoric of working in common towards salvation, thereby encouraging the perpetuation of the values the process sought to instil.

5 Ferrar Letters: letter-writing and the seventeenth-century family

Letters as Ligaments *the World doe tie*
*Else all commerce and love 'twixt men would die.*¹

Family letter archives are accustomed sites of investigation for historians researching the lives of people in medieval and early modern England. Plumbing the extensive collections of correspondence of families such as the Pastons, Lisles, Stonors, Harleys and Verneys has provided valuable insights into their social worlds, ideals, and spiritual and material concerns, contributing to histories of the family and specific family histories as well as to broader historical understandings of the period.² According to the priorities and approach of the historian, letters in general can yield a variety of information.³ For example, they can be studied as material objects, and for conventional forms of address and structure; they can give some indication of literacy skills; they can be read for their political, regional and confessional peculiarities; they can reflect the nature of relationships, generally defined by gender and position in social and familial hierarchies; they can offer glimpses at individual character, although the extent to which authorial personalities are mediated is a constant subject of disputation; and family letters can help in developing a picture of a family's identity or identities.

Given the range of strategies and rewards available to historians who do examine correspondence, its applications have long been rather colourless and conservative.

¹ James Howell, "To the *knowing* READER. Of Familiar or *Letters-missive*." *Epistolae Ho-Eliaanae. Familiar letters domestic and forren*... London: printed for Humphrey Moseley, 1645.

² Pastons: Norman Davis (ed.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Early English Texts Society, 2004; Colin Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: The First Phase*, Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990; Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: Fastolf's Will*, Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996; Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: Endings*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000; Richard Barber (ed.), *The Pastons: A Family in the Wars of the Roses*, Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1993. Lisles: Muriel St Clare Byrne, *The Lisle Letters*. 6 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981. Stonors: Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (ed.), *The Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290-1483*, London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1919; Maurice Keen, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages, 1348-1500*, London: Penguin, 1990. Harleys: Jacqueline Eales, *Puritans and Roundheads: The Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the Outbreak of the English Civil War*, Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Verneys: John Bruce (ed.), *Letters and Papers of the Verney Family Down to the End of the Year 1639. Works of the Camden Society*, no. 56 (1853). New York: Johnson Reprint, 1968; Miriam Slater, *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century: The Verneys of Claydon House*, London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984; Susan E. Whyman, *Sociability and Power in Late Stuart England: The Cultural Worlds of the Verneys, 1660-1720*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

³ "The significance of letters and correspondence for historical studies is obvious, because they can throw light on the development of both language and society". Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen, "Best patterns for your imitation?: Early modern letter-writing instruction and real correspondence" in Risto Hiltunen & Janne Skaffari (eds), *Discourse Perspectives on English. Medieval to Modern*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2003, pp.167-95 (p.169).

However, those who have recently taken up the study of letters are revitalising the territory, seeking to explore women's letter-writing and, more widely, to consider gender in the epistolary form.⁴ James Daybell heads the field of current early-modern English research with his work on women's letters.⁵ Another stream of influence has issued from burgeoning research into the history of reading, promoting the consideration of letters as a category of readable material.⁶ Debates about literacy are relevant to the history of letter-writing particularly insofar as such discussions engage in speculation about the implication of literacy in the evolution of modern subjectivity and its characteristic "private" or "intimate" dimensions, and encourage consideration of writing as an act of agency.⁷ Present-day readers habitually view letters as personal documents, outstanding among texts for what they reveal of their authors' inner selves, and this tendency wants questioning. The categorical approach is conceptually akin to literary scholars' long-established treatment of correspondence as a genre, albeit one whose constituent texts, at least in the English tradition, conventionally date from the great letter-craze of the eighteenth century.⁸ Popular epistolary fiction originated in this period; Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-8) may be singled out from amongst the many texts as the epitome. The significant and voluminous literary research is work that the historian is well advised to consult for its depth of textual analysis and attention to conventions of the genre, and for the alternative perspectives opened by criticism based upon different disciplinary priorities. It posits, in multiple configurations, a web associating the epistolary form, the development of the

⁴ Linguists too are considering gender in early English letters, for example, Manfred Markus, "The Development of Prose in Early Modern English in View of the Gender Question: Using Grammatical Idiosyncrasies of 15th and 17th Century Letters", *European Journal of English Studies* 5:2 (2001), pp.181-196. Further discussion of linguistic work follows.

⁵ James Daybell, "Recent Studies in Sixteenth-Century Letters", *English Literary Renaissance* 35:2 (2005), pp.331-362; Daybell (ed.), *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*, Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave, 2001; Daybell, "Women's Letters and Letter-Writing in England, 1540-1603", unpublished PhD thesis, University of Reading, 2000.

⁶ See for example Rebecca Earle (ed.), *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999. On the history of reading: Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading*, London: Flamingo, 1997; Guglielmo Cavallo & Roger Chartier (eds), *A History of Reading in the West*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999. Elsewhere Chartier emphasises the very real connection between letter-writing and reading in framing his study of letter-writing manuals (*secrétaires*). "To be quite sure that they complied with standard rules, popular letter-writers first had to be readers." "Introduction: An Ordinary Kind of Writing. Model letters and letter-writing in *ancien régime* France" in Roger Chartier, Alain Boureau & Cécile Dauphin, *Correspondence: Models of Letter-Writing from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Christopher Woodall, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997, p.2.

⁷ Mary O'Connor, "Representations of intimacy in the life-writing of Anne Clifford and Anne Dormer", pp.79-96 in Patrick Coleman, Jayne Lewis & Jill Kowalik (eds), *Representations of the Self from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; Elizabeth S. Cohen, "Between Oral and Written Culture: The Social Meaning of an Illustrated Love Letter" in Barbara B. Diefendorf & Carla Hesse (eds), *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800): Essays in Honor of Natalie Zemon Davis*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993, pp.181.

⁸ For an introduction to the epistolary genre in early modern Europe see Claudio Guillén, "Notes toward the Study of the Renaissance Letter" in Barbara Kiefer Lewalski (ed.), *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press, 1986, pp.70-101.

modern subject, women, the commodification of both the feminine voice and the letter, and the origin of the modern novel.⁹

Returning to an earlier starting point, now both historians and English scholars have looked to the extra-canonical letters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as subjects of examination in their own right but also partly motivated, it seems, by the will to view the surging epistolary culture of the subsequent century from a more distant perspective and thence to speculate about its deeper roots.¹⁰ Both groups practise flexible methods of textual criticism and thereby resist the often unconstructive and indeed misrepresentative propensity to classify letters as definitively factual or imaginative documents and to apply historical or literary analysis accordingly. Together it may be hoped their efforts will contribute to the broader interrogation of “[t]he most historically powerful fiction of the letter”: “that which figures it as the trope of authenticity and intimacy, which elides questions of linguistic, historical, and political mediation, and which construes the letter as feminine.”¹¹ The generalisation is based upon assumptions developed through the study of eighteenth-century literary culture and related notions are regularly ascribed to “real” correspondence of previous eras without due consideration.

A further perspective on English epistolography is afforded via the research of linguists, whose findings have thus far gone almost entirely unreferenced in history and other fields. Centres of linguistic scholarship have produced not only skilful analysis of the mechanics of English letters but also important compilations of letter texts in their corpora. Perhaps most notable amongst these is the very substantial *Corpus of Early English Correspondence* (CEEC), begun by the Sociolinguistics and Language History Project Team at the University of Helsinki in 1993. The CEEC comprises c.6000 letters dating from 1417 to 1681, drawn from 96 collections.¹² A representative part of it was released as the *Corpus of*

⁹ See for example the introduction to Amanda Gilroy & W.M. Verhoeven (eds), *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture*, Charlottesville & London: University Press of Virginia, 2000, and Mary A. Favret, *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics, and the Fiction of Letters*, Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

“It has become almost a cliché among social and literary historians to consider letters a ‘women’s genre’ ... and closely allied with the development of the feminocentric novel in England and France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.” Janet Gurkin Altman, “Women’s Letters in the Public Sphere”, in Elizabeth C. Goldsmith & Dena Goodman, *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995, p.99. Fritz Nies, “Un genre féminin?” *Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France* 78 (1978), pp.994-1003. But cf. Altman (p.101): “letters historically have been the form of writing least subject to monopoly by a particular sex or class.”

¹⁰ Markus, “The Development of Prose in Early Modern English”, p.182, citing Frank Kermode & Anita Kermode (eds), *The Oxford Book of Letters*, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p.xxiii.

¹¹ Gilroy & Verhoeven, *Epistolary Histories*, p. 1.

¹² Arja Nurmi, “The *Corpus of Early English Correspondence Sampler* (CEECS)”, *ICAME Journal* 23 (1999), Table 2, p.56. ICAME, the International Computer Archive of Modern and Medieval English, is based at Aksis (the Department of Culture, Language and Information Technology), University of Bergen, Norway, <http://nora.hd.uib.no/whatis.html> (accessed Nov 9, 2005).

Early English Correspondence Sampler (CEECs) in 1998.¹³ A more modest collection is the *Innsbruck Letter Corpus*, its original 254 letters dating from 1386 to 1688 now supplemented in the interest of better representing women's epistolary writing.¹⁴ Whilst the objects and methods of linguistic study are, at points, irreconcilable with the interests and competencies of historical researchers, there is surely scope for fruitful dialogue and further investigation, including the potential promotion of the corpora as resources for historians.¹⁵

Returning to English family correspondence, what does all of this signify for the contemporary historian tackling an archive of letters? What is there to be gained, and what strategy should be engaged to do so?

In this instance, work is based upon the relics and legacy of the seventeenth-century Ferrar family, with the object of finding out about the form and quality of their lives and what family meant for them on a day-to-day basis. Amongst the midden of Ferrar evidence is an extensive family correspondence. Reading it, and noting down a miscellany of facts about persons and events and recurring concerns along the way, it is possible to learn about things that happened, such as illnesses, journeys and betrothals. From references to various items, like bedding, food and furniture, details of the domestic interior can be painted in. Mention is made of topical events from time to time – in London “Theres great news abroad and true” in early July of 1631 about the capture of Magdeburg¹⁶ – as are tantalising indications of interaction with eminent figures such as the financially-straitened Mr Cromell [*sic*] who evaded the best efforts of the Ferrars' agent to detain him concerning some unsettled business one day in Huntingdon in 1626. (Poor Richard was “rayled exceedingly at” when “he acquainted Mr Cromells Sisters with the buissines”).¹⁷) Yet on the whole the Ferrar letters are a frustratingly low-yielding source.

¹³ *Corpus of Early English Correspondence Sampler* (CEECs) © Sociolinguistics and Language History Project Team, Department of English, University of Helsinki, 1998. Such valuable work continues at the Research Unit for Variation and Change in English (VARIENG) in the English Department at the University of Helsinki, <http://www.eng.helsinki.fi/varieng/team2/index.html> (accessed Jul 13, 2005).

¹⁴ Markus, “The Development of Prose in Early Modern English”, p.183.

¹⁵ Historians consulting linguistic studies of English letters will become aware of the relative inutility of the grammatical, syntactic focus for their purposes, and further, problems with the corpora, such as the criteria upon which their contents are determined and whether they represent more than the uppermost social strata. Such factors should not act as absolute deterrents to the exchange of ideas, especially in view of the fact that many linguistic projects have overtly historical dimensions, which improves the chances of common reward. For an introduction to “historical discourse linguistics” and its concerns, see Ruth Carroll, Risto Hiltunen, Matti Peikola, Janne Skaffari, Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen, Ellen Valle and Brita Wärvik, “Introduction” in Hiltunen & Skaffari, *Discourse Perspectives on English*, pp.1-12. Corpora are increasingly available in CD-ROM format.

¹⁶ Nicholas Ferrar to Mrs Ferrar, 10 Jun 1631, FP, r4, 794 [424-6]. Reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp. 261-3 but misdated as 10 July 1631. Magdeburg was destroyed on 20 May 1631 in an ill-managed victory ending the siege by Imperial forces, a massive blow to the Protestant party in the Thirty Years War.

¹⁷ John Ferrar to Nicholas Ferrar, 21 Nov 1626, FP, r3, 602 [674-5]. Reproduced in part in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.247-8. Blackstone states: “The reference is almost certainly to Oliver Cromwell. The family is known to have been in serious financial difficulties at this time; in the next year, 1627, Sir Oliver Cromwell, uncle to the great Oliver, was forced to sell the family mansion at Hinchinbrooke.”

Many of them communicate almost nothing but the assurance of regard: daughters honour their mothers with letters; friends pledge loyalty and service to one another; men receive the respects of their nephews. Variants of this sort survive in drifts. Surely the reader ought to be able to glean more than a seasoning of incidental facts to accompany the multiple expressions of esteem?

The present argument suggests a method of using family letters, a way of reading that focuses on the functions of correspondence rather than simply scrutinising its content. It is a way of discerning something about the Ferrars and more generally about what it meant to be part of a family that accounts for the masses of respectful letters and gives a macroscopic view of the family as a network that is unavailable to the historian who simply sifts through papers in search of factual nuggets. It draws upon a range of historical research and is informed by theoretical approaches and findings from scholars of English literature and theatre, and linguistics.¹⁸ It is hoped that through explaining and applying this rationale some relevant and more broadly applicable points can be made, independent of the project of writing historically about the Ferrars.

Ferrar Correspondence, c.1620-c.1640

Letters form the majority of existing Ferrar documents, and they are the richest sources available for developing a picture of the daily concerns of the family members during the years best represented. As a prelude to analysis of the Ferrars' correspondence, a brief description of some of its main characteristics during the period being examined is necessary.

The Ferrar archive contains letters dating from c.1590 to c.1790,¹⁹ though the discussion in this chapter will concentrate on the letters exchanged roughly in the period from 1620 to 1640 in accordance with the focus of the entire study. The letters offer a sense of their authors' different characters, however mediated their self-representation may be by convention and/or specific intentions, together with impressions of other people referred to in the transactions, and they act as a register of significant events such as births, deaths, excursions and troubles. They also help by showing the particulars of the material circumstances of the Ferrars' lives, recording major investments from clothing and musical

¹⁸ Naomi Tadmor's *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) embodies a very effective linguistic approach to early-modern English social and cultural history. Tadmor examines uses of the terminology of family and household in five eighteenth-century textual sites as the basis of her study.

¹⁹ D.R. Ransome (ed.), *Ferrar Papers*.

instruments such as the organ for the main assembly room in the house to devotional paraphernalia and bookbinding materials, as well as quotidian purchases including food items and wine.

It is clearly expected that anyone journeying out from Little Gidding will write to confirm their safe passage upon arriving at their destination, and that during their absence regular contact should be maintained with those remaining at home. Susanna Collet pressed her sons at work in London for regular letters, hoping for weekly correspondence but ordinarily receiving news on a fortnightly or monthly basis. Collet daughters visiting their sister Susanna Mapletoft's household at Margaretting in Essex were to write home each week. Similarly, Nicholas demanded weekly letters from Mary and Anna Collet, and these seem to be the principal medium of his spiritual supervision (there is no record of pastoral meetings, which of course is not to say these did not take place) despite the fact that there was not always a physical distance between them.²⁰ All of the Collet girls wrote regularly to their uncle when he was away. Fortunately both Nicholas's and his adult nieces' letters have survived in many instances, enabling the reader to develop a fuller appreciation of their differences in outlook and of the dynamics of what was after all a dialogical exchange. Their correspondence serves to remind the reader that letter-writing is generally only one component of the broader dialogue that existed between the involved parties and indeed other family members and friends; in general we cannot know the character or extent of other interpersonal transactions.²¹

Su Mapletoft's letters to her uncle Nicholas are also numerous, as if she aspired to keep up the standard practice of her girlhood during her married life. Conventional obligation accounts for her frequent writing to some extent. But beyond this, her letters betray a palpable longing to return to the fold at Little Gidding, exacerbated it must be presumed by recurrent illness and difficulties surrounding pregnancies, such that she likely set great store on what succour she did receive from Nicholas, however dry his exhortations to pious endurance may seem to the modern reader. The content and tone of

²⁰ See for example postscript, Anna Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 7 Jul 1627, FP, r4, 621[8]. The relationship between Mary and Anna Collet and Nicholas Ferrar is the subject of Chapter 6, below. That these family members communicated with one another via correspondence even though they were apparently close enough to one another to hold a verbal conversation belies generalisations based upon the classically-based theory that written communication was inferior to spoken communication, such as the statement that "whoever was able to communicate face to face had no desire to write." Henk J. M. Nellen, "In Strict Confidence: Grotius' Correspondence with his Socinian Friends" in Toon Van Houdt, Jan Papy, Gilbert Tournoy & Constant Matheussen (eds), *Self-Presentation and Social Identification: The Rhetoric and Pragmatics of Letter Writing in Early Modern Times*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002, p.228. Perhaps it was the very propinquity of others in a house full of people that prompted the adoption of arguably clearer, more private written testimony, together with the Protestant, literate, educated family's presumable esteem for the written word. Nicholas explains to Su Collet (soon to be Mapletoft) the benefit of putting intentions she has previously spoken of into writing. Nicholas Ferrar to Susanna Collet, 5 Jul 1627, FP, r4, 620[6].

²¹ Rosemary O'Day, "Tudor and Stuart Women: their Lives through their Letters" in James Daybell (ed.), *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*, Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave, 2001, p.127

her sisters' writing, too, indicate the quality of Susanna's distress. In one letter, for instance, Mary expresses support and encourages Su to concentrate upon her good fortune and her family's assured love. She does so without ever denying the foundation of her sister's unhappiness:

God hath given you many Greate Reall and Singular blessings but with a clause of separation from your Parents & frends In body onely not in mynde. There Loves grow every day not onely in measure but fervency²².

Many of the letters preserved in the archive belonged to or were written by Nicholas Ferrar. He writes to all manner of household members, relatives, friends and business contacts. His correspondence with Arthur Woodnoth is best represented and is arguably the most interesting record of a single, complex relationship in the collection; certainly it is the best-documented and most revealing picture of a relationship between two men. John Ferrar's correspondence is well represented too. He deals somewhat less with family business and his letters are most often exchanged with particular friends like Sir Edwin Sandys, an old London Virginia Company associate. John Collet's presence however is almost undetectable through autograph documents. His writing skills were underdeveloped, judging by the near illegibility of his hand in letters like the one of February 1632, which he penned in place of the incapacitated Arthur Woodnoth.²³ Neither is he mentioned very often in the correspondence of his wife and children, aside from his wife's customary reference to him when she explains she writes with his sanction or on behalf of the two of them at the beginning of her letters: "My Dear Child, Your father being to ride abroad doth this second time commit the writeing to Me, but not as Mine, but his own Answer".²⁴ Likewise the youngest boys at Little Gidding are almost invisible.

In contrast, letters written by almost all the women in the household have survived. Mary Ferrar was engaged in written communication with her sons, relatives and friends until she died. There remains a great deal of Susanna Collet's regular correspondence with her many children and relatives also, their sheer number and the demands of proper maternal surveillance accounting for the volume of her letters to a significant extent. Some 130 of these are gathered separately from the Magdalene papers in an eighteenth-century transcription housed in the Bodleian.²⁵ At least one of Bathsheba Ferrar's letters remains, addressed to her brother Henry Owen. She is frank about being aggrieved and experiencing

²² Mary Collet to Su Mapletoft (draft), 21 Sep 1629, FP, r4, 687 [147]. Reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.253-4, but erroneously attributed to Nicholas Ferrar.

²³ John Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 9 Feb 1632, FP, r4, 839 [542].

²⁴ Susanna Collet to Thomas Collet, 21 Jan 1628, CL, fol 2^v.

²⁵ Bodleian MS. Top. Hunts e. 1, Collett Letters, University of Oxford.

antagonism from her husband John and Nicholas Ferrar following conflict over the inheritance of Mary Ferrar's London house (the old woman had apparently promised it to her daughter-in-law before dying).²⁶ There are many of Mary and Anna Collet's letters, for the most part exchanged with Nicholas, and there exist a few specimens of most of their younger sisters' letter-writing. No evidence survives to suggest that the sisters exchanged letters between themselves at home as they did with Nicholas. There are, however, letters at least nominally co-authored by several sisters, though it is difficult to tell whether this was a practical way of condensing their individual epistolary obligations or a shared activity which they initiated themselves.²⁷

None of the correspondence of the wards, widows, or maids (should they have been literate), nor of the schoolmasters at Little Gidding is preserved in the archive, a situation which suggests certain points about the selection of documents incorporated into the Ferrar family archive. Writings of members of the blood-marital family are included while those of other householders are not, despite the fact that it is quite plausible that the latter might have been considered family in contemporary terms by virtue of their status as co-residents in the household, subject to the supervision of the same male household head (master).²⁸ Biological or marital kinship, and thus an exclusionary definition of family, is clearly important in determining the picture of those who belong, a picture that is reified in the records during each generation's life and bequeathed to the future after its dissolution. It should be remembered that the archive functioned as a living register of the business of family members during their lifetime. Representation in it therefore reflects the set of individuals' affairs to which the household head reserved access and for which he possessed ongoing responsibility – his sphere of influence and that body of knowledge to which he was deemed entitled.²⁹ Indeed, the inclusion of letters indicates power that extended to custody of the material property of family members: no small matter in view of the acute significance of small personal items like letters for (in particular) women's sense of self and autonomy that scholars such as Mary O'Connor have observed.³⁰

²⁶ Bathsheba Ferrar to Henry Owen (copy), c. Jun 1637, FP, r6, 1056 [780-82]. Reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.287-9, but misdated 1636.

²⁷ For example, Hester, Anna & Mary Collet to Margaret Collet, 1 Jun 1629, FP, r4, 674 [119].

²⁸ On the language of family in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, in particular the use of the term "family" to denote all members of a household including non-relatives, see Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, pp.21-4.

²⁹ For "household head", he or those in charge of the interests of the domestic and dynastic collective may be inferred, but "family" could just as well be substituted, in the sense of the fundamental unit of patriarchal society. Accordingly, a male conventionally held the headship. In the absence of any sort of democratic governance in the family, terms implying communal or gender-balanced authority are avoided. The reader may dwell further upon the treatment of personal business as "common property" in relation to discussions of "public" and "private" spheres in the early modern period.

³⁰ For example, O'Connor, "Representations of intimacy". Of course it is possible that women pursued correspondence which they kept to and/or for themselves. On the materiality of letters, David Barton and

Aside from the impact of unforeseen events upon the survival of papers, one characteristic that consistently skews the images of the past that archives make available to the present is the set of criteria upon which the documents that have survived or been preserved were selected. The most outstanding criterion is gender. It was according to notions of behaviour appropriate to their sex that so many of the Ferrar women participated in correspondence, and in the process made constant expressions of respect for the men and the masculine institutions which governed their everyday lives. The incorporation of their letters in the family archive demonstrates that both the women and their written exchanges were subject to surveillance. It is not unreasonable to venture that those letters which were retained commonly exemplified model feminine conduct – perhaps even in themselves, as specimens of the ideal letter – or demonstrated women’s weak or transgressive nature, their submission to advisors, and their acceptance of help in committing to personal reform. The Ferrar papers contain examples of each of these cases, from Susanna Collet’s model exhortatory letters to her children, to Bathsheba Ferrar’s chastisement by Nicholas for contesting her husband’s decision to put their son into breeches, and Anna Collet and Su Mapletoft’s repeated pledges to work on their pious behaviour.³¹

Just as it is likely that gender explains the substantial presence of letters in the Ferrar archive written by the women of the family, so it is plausible that gender determined the absence of writing by and pertaining to the non-relative women in the household, the widows and servants. Apart from class, gender was the key determinant of literacy in early modern England, particularly of the active skill of writing. Perhaps these women could not write letters. Moreover, they were women for whom fundamental responsibility resided elsewhere (or at least so it could be justifiably argued): that is, in the households of their husbands, fathers or sons. The widows in the Ferrar household dwelt in an “exceptional” state of masterlessness, brought about by a largely unknown combination of lifecycle phase, illness, destitution and/or indisposal or absence of surviving relatives.³² Women servants were most likely young and single, or married and attached to a separate domicile.

Nigel Hall state: “[l]etters have particular illocutionary force: the existence of the letter itself has meaning in addition to the content and, in a reflexive way, reference is often made within the letter to the existence of the letter itself.” Introduction, Barton & Hall (eds), *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1999, pp.6-7.

³¹ Nicholas Ferrar to Bathsheba Ferrar & to John Ferrar, 21 May 1636, FP, r5, 995[627-30] (N.B. misdated in Ransome’s finding list as 21 May 1635); printed in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.292-95.

³² On the ambiguous state of widowhood in early-modern culture see Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, p.68; Amy Froide, “Marital Status as a Category of Difference: Singlewomen and Widows in Early Modern England”, in Judith Bennett & Amy Froide (eds), *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, pp.236-69; and Sandra Cavallo & Lyndan Warner (eds), *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Harlow: Longman, 1999.

The Ferrars had the charge of both groups on a day-to-day basis yet, it may be proposed, were less accountable for and indeed concerned with their enduring conduct and welfare. The women's presence in the household was as it were a sort of wardship; a diffuse sense of their ultimate lack of consequence to the family and the Ferrars' corresponding diminished responsibility to and for them is discernible. Surely the impermanence of social status, especially pronounced for women, moving from one condition to another as they shift between the households and purviews of various men across a lifetime, is relevant here. Relationship by blood or name (marriage) means incorporation in the long-term definition of a given family, the line of descent, and it is this lineal family that is described in the letter archive.

By the same token it may be concluded that understandings of gender are a key to explaining the absence of the Little Gidding schoolmasters' papers, or indeed much reference to them at all, in the Ferrar archive. Adult men were presumably accorded autonomous government over their business and its material appurtenances. Their correspondence and concerns were their own to take from one post to another, some items, it is possible, going on to form the basis of their own family archives when they married and settled.

The gender differential obtains in relation to the constitution of archives not only because of the social standards of the seventeenth century, but also because of the prevailing values of historians of later periods who have worked with the records. Participating in the dominant historical discourse of their time influences the priorities of historians and archivists, so it is reasonable to suppose that the antiquarians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who gathered and sorted the Ferrar records might have privileged the preservation of documents pertaining to "important" (read: masculine) matters such as secular and ecclesiastical politics and business, just as their contemporaries engaged in writing histories may have been inclined to utilise evidence reflecting these conventional concerns in constructing their secondary accounts. Effectively, it is reasonable to conclude that gender was a principal organising category of the Ferrar letter archive and a determining characteristic of their contents over an extended period.

Models for Letters: Epistolary Form

- Maister. *What is an Epistle or letter?*
- Scholer. *An Epistle or letter is a kinde of conference or communication, of one that is absent, with another that is not present.*
- Maister. *To what end was it devised?*
- Scholer. *That we might conveniently certifie and informe our friendes in their absence, of all such thinges, as either to them are belonging, or to us apperteyning.*³³

It was mentioned above that literary scholars conceive of letters as comprising a textual genre. It is a position for which documented precedent stretches back to the classical period. For historians, adopting the logic of genre brings to the fore the significance of compositional rules and frameworks particular to the business of letter-writing, and further illuminates the self-consciousness with which much of this writing was done. It suggests paying attention to meanings of the form and functions of letters rather than simply focusing upon their content. Moreover, it is in accordance with the taxonomical spirit of early modern epistolography manuals, which commonly begin by defining the letter.³⁴

Letter-writing in seventeenth-century England was shaped by generic conventions, its formalities corresponding with contemporary social hierarchies as well as reflecting classical ideals. Composing a letter appropriate to a given situation and mindful of one's own circumstances and those of the recipient was a matter of considerable weight; a range of letter-writing manuals were available to provide models and education in fitting styles of address and simultaneously in the social codes which underpinned them.³⁵

³³ Opening dialogue, Abraham Fleming, *A Panoplie of Epistles, or, a looking glass for the unlearned...*, London: printed [by H. Middleton] for Ralph Newberie, 1576.

³⁴ As Tanskanen points out, the letter was regarded as being the direct transcription of speech or thought, a discourse to a person or persons absent. "Best patterns for your imitation", pp.175-76. It is noteworthy, and ironic given the place of such statements at the opening of books intended to define and propagate conventions for letter-writing, that in this conception of correspondence, transparency and a degree of freedom from external influences or rules is implicit. This is akin to the imagined transparency of both women and language that Gilroy and Verhoeven identify "at the heart of [the] fiction" of the letter "which figures it as the trope of authenticity and intimacy...", as stated above. *Epistolary Histories*, p.3. Similarly, Warren V. Boutcher, "Literature, Thought or Fact? Past and Present Directions in the Study of the Early Modern Letter" in Van Houdt et al. (eds), *Self-Presentation and Social Identification*, p.139.

³⁵ Tanskanen, "Best patterns for your imitation", p.177. Katherine Gee Hornbeak compiled an inventory of letter-writing manuals produced in England: "The Complete Letter Writer in England, 1568-1800", *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages* 15:3-4 (1934). See also Jean Robertson, *The Art of Letter Writing: An Essay on the Handbooks Published in England during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, London: University Press of Liverpool & Hodder & Stoughton, 1942. Roger Chartier: "To read a *secrétaire* might be to learn about the ordering of the social world, strictly translated into the formalities of the letter-writing code...", "An Ordinary Kind of Writing" in Chartier, Boureau & Dauphin, *Correspondence*, p.5. Chartier further points to the potential for multiple outcomes from reading a *secrétaire*, besides learning how properly to write letters, which together "nourished a social knowhow and a social imaginary."

Lawrence D. Green lists three principal influences upon early modern English letter-writing before the mid-seventeenth century.³⁶

First there was the formal style of classical modes, transferred through the continental humanist tradition. Letters were the subject of enthusiastic research by neo-Latinists following Petrarch's 1345 discovery in Verona of Cicero's *Letters to Atticus*, *Epistolae ad Atticum*.³⁷ Cicero's letters were pre-eminent amongst those of Latin writers (such as Pliny, Symmachus, and Sidonius) in providing the learned community with patterns for emulation. Greek antiquity also bequeathed its model letter collections and letter-writing instructions.³⁸ Clearly these precedents captured the imagination of male scholars: like his ancient predecessors, Petrarch was moved to address letters to long-dead heroes like Socrates, and in turn compiled his personal *Epistolae* after Cicero's example. These too, like subsequent humanists' letters, attracted much scholarly contemplation.³⁹

The trend for studying letters and perfecting letter-writing as a discipline spread throughout the Mediterranean and into northern Europe, binding scholars in a "republic of letters" through which they established a distinct intellectual identity.⁴⁰ Erasmus and later Vives, partly in the former's debt but providing greater detail on ancient epistolography, stand out amongst the figures inspired to pen letter-writing treatises. Wide-reaching in influence, both their essays were entitled *De conscribendis epistolis* and the two were commonly printed and bound together.⁴¹ Works such as these, in various adaptations, were standard in early-modern grammar schools and universities where they formed part of the study of rhetoric.⁴²

³⁶ Lawrence D. Green, "French Letters and English Anxiety in the Seventeenth Century", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 66: 3&4 (2003), pp.263-74.

³⁷ On humanist cultures of letter-writing and the famous "republic of letters" see for example Van Houdt et al. (eds), *Self-Presentation and Social Identification*; M. Laureys et al. (eds), *The World of Justus Lipsius*, Brussels & Rome: Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome 68, 1998; Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters: The Construction of Charisma in Print*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.

³⁸ Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask, London & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953, p.76. For further information, see Abraham Malherbe (comp. & trans.), *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988.

³⁹ Rosemary O'Day lists Cicero's *Epistles* alongside Erasmus' *Colloquies* and Aesop's *Fables* as texts used for daily reading by children learning Latin by the "mother tongue" method in the accidence forms of English grammar schools c.1550-1650. *Education and Society*, p.67.

⁴⁰ "It can be argued that many humanists and other intellectuals wrote letters in order to define themselves as literators, scholars, and scientists." Through letters they "defined themselves as belonging to a specific group of people who shared the same interests and ideals, and were engaged in similar endeavours." Toon Van Houdt & Jan Papy, "Introduction", pp.1-13 in Van Houdt et al. (eds), *Self-Presentation and Social Identification*, p.3.

⁴¹ Desiderius Erasmus, *Libellus de conscribendis epistolis*, Cambridge: printed for John Siberch, 1521. Juan Luis Vives, *De conscribendis epistolis*, 1536. For Erasmus and Vives on letter-writing see Judith Rice Henderson's "Erasmus and the Art of Letter-Writing" in James J. Murphy (ed.), *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, pp.331-55, and her "Defining the Genre of the Letter: Juan Luis Vives' *De conscribendis epistolis*", *Renaissance & Reformation* n.s. 13 (1989), pp.299-312.

⁴² Alan Stewart and Heather Wolfe, *Letterwriting in Renaissance England*, Washington, D.C.: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 2004, p.21. "The Latin scholar had at his disposal also texts demonstrating the art of

Rhetoric was a central component of scholastic and humanistic curricula alike.⁴³

The position of letter-writing in the Renaissance educational agenda built upon and in certain respects diverged from the medieval tradition of the *ars dictaminis*, a rhetorical system that placed especial emphasis upon “the art of epistolary style” which had grown up in the eleventh century “out of the needs of administrative procedure, and was primarily intended to furnish models for letters and official documents”.⁴⁴ Englishmen trained in such a practical skill as letter-writing during their education could carry it into their professional, adult lives, together with techniques and habits of knowledge classification cultivated at the same time. Thus the archiving of letters was one of many practices that contributed to the general “bureaucratisation of life” amongst the literate classes of early modern England.⁴⁵ Further, the position and status of letters in men’s formal education provides a good explanation for the proliferation and popularisation of editions of letters of “great men” during the period.⁴⁶ As Warren Boutcher writes, “real” historical letters “were published as rhetorical exempla for the teaching and learning of civil prudence and practical ethics”.⁴⁷

The second body of texts influencing early-modern English letter-writing culture, according to Green, was comprised of French (and some Italian) vernacular works.

writing letters – the most popular of which remained Erasmus’s *De Conscribendis Epistolis* (1521) – and dictionaries.” O’Day, *Education and Society*, p.68. Reflecting on his time at St John’s College, Cambridge (1617-19), Sir Simonds D’Ewes wrote that he supplemented the limited opportunities available to him to practise his oral Latin by writing letters: “... my frequent Latin letters, and more frequent English, being sometimes very elaborate, did much help to amend and perfect my style in either tongue; which letters I sent to several friends...” J.O. Halliwell (ed.), *The Autobiography and correspondence of Sir Simonds D’Ewes during the Reigns of James I and Charles I*, 2 vols, London: Richard Bentley, 1845, I, pp.120-2, quoted in O’Day, *Education and Society*, p.114. See also “Humanism and the Humanities: Erasmus’ *Opus de conscribendis epistolis* in Sixteenth-Century Schools” in Carol Poster & Linda Mitchell (eds), *Letter-Writing Manuals from Antiquity to the Present*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003. Vives and Erasmus were, of course, extremely significant contributors to the development of early modern education, producing both textbooks and works expounding their educational principles.

⁴³ James J. Murphy, “*Ars dictaminis*: The Art of Letter-Writing” in Murphy (ed.), *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974, pp.194-268.

⁴⁴ Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, pp.75-6. Judith Rice Henderson highlights the tension in the Renaissance between the humanistic appeal of the classical familiar letter, a relatively casual conversation between friends or relatives, and the official document implied by the medieval *ars dictaminis*. She points to the conflict this created in the manuals, which trumpet the classical ideal of letters as intimate communications then offer highly pragmatic instructions for letter-writing as rhetorical tool for use in professional negotiations. “Humanist Letter Writing: Private Conversation or Public Forum?” in Van Houdt et al. (eds), *Self-Presentation and Social Identification*, p.17. Emil J. Polak has catalogued epistolary texts from the medieval and early modern periods held in various libraries: *Medieval and Renaissance Letter Treatises and Form Letters. A Census of Manuscripts Found in Eastern Europe and the Former U.S.S.R.*, Leiden: Brill, 1993, and *Medieval and Renaissance Letter Treatises and Form Letters: A Census of Manuscripts Found in Part of Western Europe, Japan, and the United States of America*, Leiden: Brill, 1994.

⁴⁵ O’Day, *Education and Society*, pp.70-1. Class and gender clearly define those eligible for such an education, though similar taxonomical record-keeping skills were learned by young women and applied in the business of domestic management.

⁴⁶ On letter-writing instruction in the education of men of middling and upper ranks, see Cécile Jagodzinski, *Privacy and Print: Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-Century England*, Charlottesville & London: University Press of Virginia, 1999, p.76.

⁴⁷ Boutcher, “Literature, Thought or Fact?” p.147.

Correspondence manuals and collections were often used in teaching French language, the most notable being the very popular letters of Balzac, which then appeared in English translation from 1634.

Finally, Green points to the light and entertaining fictional letter-based books of the English vernacular tradition. The fictional content of the model letters provided in epistolary manuals creates a space that can lend itself to comedy, particularly given the stereotypical situations that might necessitate written exchanges, and the personages associated with them.⁴⁸ They are also exercises in rhetoric and thus opportune sites for expressive flourishes. There is no hard line separating the instructional and the entertaining in the literature in question.

The three streams began to coalesce in the mid-seventeenth century.⁴⁹

The first English letter-writing handbook was William Fulwood's *The Enimie of Idlenesse* (1568), comprising material purloined from two French texts of the 1550s. It was reprinted nine times to 1621 and enjoyed sustained currency alongside other sixteenth-century volumes such as Abraham Fleming's *A Panoplie of Epistles* (1576), based on translations from Cicero, and, most influential of all, Angel Day's *The English Secretorie* (1586), which incorporated material from Erasmus' earlier work.⁵⁰ Fleming and Day's texts were both variously amended and reprinted throughout the seventeenth century.

Manuals like these offer letters suited to a limited range of commonplace circumstances. Linda C. Mitchell has isolated the most consistent themes represented in model letters in more than 50 English handbooks spanning 150 years from the mid-sixteenth century: "parent-child relationships, education of youth, marriage proposals; changes of fortune, including financial reversals and the challenges of illness; the course of friendship; business matters."⁵¹ The utility of advice for letter-writing in connection with these common, everyday scenarios is evident. Epistolographies took on an increasingly pragmatic character through the seventeenth century, shedding some of the ornament and custom attendant to their scholarly origins and transforming into a means to advance the prospects of ordinary young men under the tutelage of "the regent masters of the rural

⁴⁸ The association between exemplary letters and humour is present in letter-related texts of late Greek antiquity, including "rhetorical letter-stereotypes, and finally collections of letter which provide models for describing various social categories (fishermen, peasants, parasites, *betairai*).⁴⁸ Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, p.75.

⁴⁹ Green, "French Letters", pp.263-66. On the continental (particularly French) heritage of volumes of model letters – *secrétaires* – see Chartier, "An Ordinary Kind of Writing" and Chapter 2, "*Secrétaires* for the People?" in Chartier, Boureau & Dauphin, *Correspondence*, pp.1-23 & 59-111; and Terttu Nevalainen, "Continental conventions in early English correspondence" in Hans-Jürgen Diller & Manfred Görlach (eds), *Towards a History of English as a History of Genres*, Heidelberg: C. Winter, 2001, pp.203-224.

⁵⁰ Angel Day, *The English secretorie, Wherin is containned, a perfect method, for the inditing of all manner of epistles and familiar letters...*, London: Robert Waldegrave, 1586.

⁵¹ Linda C. Mitchell "Entertainment and Instruction: Women's Roles in the English Epistolary Tradition", *Huntington Library Quarterly* 66: 3&4 (2003), p.332.

Schools”.⁵² Progressively, the letter-writing manual, or secretary, developed characteristics more akin to fiction than edifying literature, infused with the spirit of prose-romance and revelling in details of English life.⁵³

The “democratising” trend towards entertainment in letter-writing manuals accords with what Green calls the English “native tradition”. A counterpoint to the sometimes formal and invariably formulaic nature of instructional tomes in the continental style, this tradition is represented amongst other works by Nicholas Breton’s *A Poste with a Madde Packet of Letters* (1602). The disorganised collection of short and amusing letters gathered in the *Packet* was alleged to be real correspondence dropped by a carrier, presented intact and accompanied only by a brief introductory paragraph.⁵⁴ Books adopting the “packet” trope like this one responded to popular interest in letters, and in the “private” business of others. Stretching into the realm of leisure, the social significance of correspondence was certainly extensive.

In analysing the form of letters and their social meanings, it is important to bear in mind the significance attributed to the physical appearance of a letter in the early modern period. Not only conventions of address, but also styles of handwriting and the principles that governed the arrangement of text and the use of space on the page were meaningful, and these latter features are often erased in the neatly-typed transcriptions of manuscripts that go to press today. The importance of page layout becomes clear to the reader of letter-writing manuals. As Gibson points out, instructions for the proper placement of the subscription are stated clearly in Fulwood’s *Enimie of Idlenesse*.⁵⁵

to our superiours we must write at the right syde in the nether ende of the paper, saying: By your most humble and obedient sonne, or servant, &c. And to our equalles we may write towards the midst of the paper saying: By your faythfull friende for ever &c. To our inferiours we may write high at the left hand saying: By yours &c.

As a general rule, the more blank space left on the page, the more humble the posture the writer wishes to adopt.⁵⁶ In the case of the letters in the Ferrar archive, many are copies or drafts and thus do not demonstrate the spacing that one might expect to find in the versions actually sent. Further, letters exchanged with other family members seem to reveal pragmatic moderation in the observance of customary deference: suitable formats are

⁵² For further detail, see Stewart & Wolfe, *Letterwriting in Renaissance England*, p.24.

⁵³ Stewart & Wolfe, *Letterwriting in Renaissance England*, p.56ff.

⁵⁴ Green, “French Letters”, p.265.

⁵⁵ The description here is based upon Jonathan Gibson, “Significant Space in Manuscript Letters”, *Seventeenth Century* 12:1 (1997), pp.1-9, esp. p.1. He quotes the 1571 edition of Fulwood.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of protocol and “non-textual indicators” in letters such as space and handwriting, see “The material letter and social signals”, Stewart & Wolfe, *Letterwriting in Renaissance England*, pp.35-54.

presented, for example Arthur Woodnoth consistently leaves a sizeable gap above and below his salutation, but the blank spaces are smaller – that is, the paper, which was an expensive commodity, is used more economically. Writers frequently fill the margins of letters with text and often old letters are reused for making notes and drafts.

As has been stated, gender was an organising principle in letter-writing as in so many spheres of early modern activity. Writing letters, it was hoped, would keep girls and young women occupied, safe from the hazards of idleness. Indeed, aside from their practical ends, the letters served as material evidence for women's prudent use of time.⁵⁷ Grace Sharington (Lady Mildmay) and her sisters are a few of the countless literate women for whom letter-writing was an imposed pastime in their youth. Lady Grace reveals in her autobiographical journal (1617-c.1620) that it was prescribed purely as an exercise:

And when she [Mrs Hamblyn, the governess] did see me idly disposed she would set me to cipher with my pen ... and sometimes set me to write a supposed letter to this or that body concerning such and such things...⁵⁸

Model letters for women's purposes were a relatively common feature of volumes such as *The English Secretorie*, but letter-writing manuals specifically for women first appeared in the seventeenth century.⁵⁹ Amongst the earliest is Jacques du Bosque's *The Secretary of Ladies* (1638)⁶⁰, translated from the French, which presents a range of letters for various occasions. The translation of texts like *The Secretary of Ladies* was a process that contributed to the spread of a discourse that constructed a pan-European femininity. Notions of the nature of woman and of proper feminine behaviour issued in a system of conventional expression for women that might be conceived of as a *lingua franca* equivalent to the Latin of educated men.

This system, together with its lexicons, the letter-writing manuals, developed further in connection with the refinement of gender norms associated with the evolving codes of sociability and the rise of manners after the Restoration and through the eighteenth century. The texts are increasingly inflected by the implication of class, or more accurately, respectability, available to those who could access knowledge of its precepts and act or perform accordingly. In view of this, and together with the internalisation of norms of gendered behaviour, it is not surprising that well-educated, well-mannered model

⁵⁷ On the related topic of Protestant women's writing in spiritual journals and the significance of accounting for daily activities, see Carolyn Steedman, "A woman writing a letter" in Earle (ed.), *Epistolary Selves*, p.118.

⁵⁸ Lady Grace Mildmay, Journal, in, *With Faith and Physic: The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay 1552-1620*, ed. Linda Pollock, London: Collins & Brown, 1993, p.26. See also Retha M. Warnicke, "Lady Mildmay's Journal: a study in autobiography and meditation in Reformation England", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 20:1 (1989), p.58.

⁵⁹ Tanskanen, "Best patterns for your imitation", p.174.

⁶⁰ Jacques Du Bosque, *The secretary of ladies*. London: Tho. Cotes, 1638.

women came to participate in the production of epistolographical guides, which are really best described as types of (or formed parts of larger) conduct books. The difference between Du Bosque's work that held with the earlier established model, and Hannah Woolley's letters and instructions in the epistolography section of *The Gentlewoman's Companion: or, A Guide to the Female Sex* (1673), illustrates a significant shift.⁶¹ Mitchell's general observation of gendered patterns in eighteenth-century epistolographies captures the nature of manuals from the preceding century equally aptly:

Men were given tools to make decisions; women were given strategies for following the rules made by others. Strict gender roles were assumed, and manuals reiterated the same ideas about how females should behave in public, transact personal business, and conduct friendships.⁶²

It is possible only to speculate as to whether specific books were purchased for use in the education of the young women at Little Gidding, but their hypothetical adoption would have been an amendment to the schoolroom curriculum established by Nicholas as they were published after his death (1637). In any case, by that date most of the girls were well beyond the age at which formal schooling was completed. However, it is very likely that the letter-writers of the Ferrar family were familiar with the works of Fulwood, Fleming and Day, or with similar letter-writing manuals, probably favouring those more decorous in character. To be sure, letter-writing was much encouraged in the household. An activity that occupied a central place in family culture, surviving letters confirm that it was practised by almost all of its literate members, and it is quite plausible that training in epistolography was a component of both the boys' and the girls' schooling.

Letter-writing, then, was governed by formal principles reflecting ideals of social and gender order, and of course these values also applied to the structure of that microcosm of terrestrial and divine order, the family. The principles were essentially conservative, reinforcing the familiar hierarchical model of Christian household with the father as its head. Just as the manuals presented (gendered) forms for addressing one's social superiors or inferiors, such as a worker to an employer, so too they laid out models for the communication of different family members, for example an aunt writing to her niece, or a mother to her son.

⁶¹ Given her intended female audience, it is not surprising that Woolley limits the model letters in her book to those for commerce between family and friends, pointing her readers to other works on the market should they need guidance for broaching more diverse, and one might presume more masculine, territories.

⁶² Mitchell, "Entertainment and Instruction", p.334.

Ferrar Letters: Concerns, Patterns, Functions

The conventions of letter-writing present in the Ferrar archive are related to the broader significance of conventions of behaviour and structures of authority that imposed order upon the seventeenth-century English world. Christians like the Ferrars worked at finding the best possible way of living amidst the flaws and disorder of terrestrial reality, and used patterns and systems to arrive at acceptable (sometimes very idiosyncratic) approximations. Reading the Ferrar letters gives some indication of their response to contextual events and reveals overriding concerns and aspirations, some of the most notable of which merit further attention.

Almost every Ferrar letter mentions the health and wellbeing of the writer, recipient and/or friends and family members. A few explanations can be posited for this persistent concern, not least the lack of any other means of getting news.⁶³ The post involved a significant lag for travelling time, unwelcome at the best of times and all the more so when someone was known to be ill. It was regularly disturbed by exigencies of weather, the state of coaches, “the badness of the ways both hither [to Little Gidding] & crossing the Country” as Nicholas remarked, and other delays.⁶⁴ The operators of the mail service shared with travellers the usual risk of injury in transit that so worried their relatives, with the added threat of trouble on the road during times of political and social unrest.⁶⁵

A preoccupation with matters of health is typical of early modern letters. Enquiries and good wishes regarding health were a conventional element recommended in letter-writing manuals,⁶⁶ and this concern, evident in theory and reality, must reflect the prevalence of illness and death, both of which were commonly conceived within the framework of Protestant Christianity as being trials of faith, tests of endurance or judgements of character, and sometimes punishment for sins. It should be recalled that mortality rates in seventeenth-century England were extremely high, and moreover the inexorable progress of fatal illness was startlingly rapid.⁶⁷ Those writing from the bedside of the infirm often include requests for restorative foods such as lemons, and the exchange of remedies and medicines with correspondence is quite usual between women even in times of good health. Nicholas sent “a stone botte of white Wyne for my Cosen mary

⁶³ On letters as a source of news see P. Dumonceaux, “Le XVII^e siècle: aux origines de la lettre intime et du genre épistolaire” in J.-L. Bonnat (ed.), *Ecrire, publier, lire. Les correspondances*. Paris: Distique, 1983, pp.289-302.

⁶⁴ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 10 May 1630, FP, r4, 722[277]. Reproduced in part in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.255-6.

⁶⁵ For further information about the post in seventeenth-century England, and the beginning of the carriage of private letters by the Royal post, see Stewart & Wolfe, pp.121-23&ff. See also P. O. Beale, *A History of the Post in England from the Romans to the Stuarts*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998.

⁶⁶ For example in Day’s *The English Secretorie*; Tanskanen, “Best patterns for your imitation”, p.180.

⁶⁷ See Mary J. Dobson, *Contours of Death and Disease in Early Modern England*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996, esp. Chapter 5; Wrigley & Schofield, *Population History of England*, pp.528-9.

praying her to attend the perfect recovery of her health” in June 1626, for example, and a few months later when Hester Collet was ill Arthur Woodnoth sent oranges and lemons to Little Gidding with his letter.⁶⁸

It may also be suggested that, aside from general care for relatives and friends, the wish to know about their health betrays constant anxiety for up-to-date knowledge of the composition of family and social networks.⁶⁹ Changes in the constitution of the kin group owing to births and marriages and, most significantly, to deaths, could have practical and social consequences. The loss of senior men could pose a distinct threat to the economic subsistence of the surviving female, young and elderly members of the family. Economic disadvantage could jeopardise their social status, but moreover the absence of adult men could compromise their ability to participate in and transact business in various masculine relationships (for instance the bonds of male sociability through which all manner of social and fiscal arrangements were made, such as money-lending and apprenticeships) and environments (professional and institutional, from the companies and courts to the church) of the public sphere. Crucially this could damage chances of negotiating occupational preferment for its sons and securing judicious marriages for its sons and daughters alike, to the social detriment of the whole family.⁷⁰

Whilst to characterise the public and private realms as respectively masculine and feminine territories of concern and activity would be a misleading oversimplification – these spaces were not mutually exclusive insofar as men were not denied private lives and interests, and women operated businesses, for example – it is nevertheless the case that contemporary ideals of public and private were thus gendered.⁷¹ Further it is appropriate to recognise that men were predominant and commanded greater leverage in matters of

⁶⁸ Nicholas Ferrar to Mrs Ferrar, 9 Jun 1626, FP, r3, 593 [652]. Reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.243-44. Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 21 Sep 1626, FP, r3, 599[665].

⁶⁹ Hence the demand for reciprocity in the exchange of letters. “Failure to reply was not done and correspondents felt obliged to apologise for keeping silent too long.” Nellen, “In Strict Confidence”, p.229. See also Susan Whyman, “‘Paper visits’: the post-Restoration letter as seen through the Verney family archive” in Earle, *Epistolary Selves*, p.19. Abundant examples of the displeasure occasioned by a failure to respond to letters exist in the Ferrar collection, for example Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 27 Oct 1630, FP, r4, 751[305], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, p.257; Susanna Collet to Edward Collet, 6 Sep 1630, CL, fols 12^r-12^v.

⁷⁰ “Marriages brought not only money and land but also (and perhaps more importantly) widening connections and patronage; if a family could not arrange marriages for its offspring it failed to expand its circle of connection...” O’Day, “Tudor and Stuart Women: their Lives through their Letters”, pp. 133-34.

⁷¹ O’Day, “Tudor and Stuart Women: their Lives through their Letters”, p. 128. On the basis of her study of nineteenth-century Swedish letters Ylva Hasselberg questions the utility of the public/private divide around which histories have been constructed after Habermas, especially in the case of histories of family and women’s history, stating that evidence from her research suggests questioning the existence of public and private spheres. “Letters, social networks and the embedded economy in Sweden: some remarks on the Swedish bourgeoisie, 1800-1850”, in Earle, Rebecca (ed.), *Epistolary Selves*, p.100; Amanda Vickery interrogates historiographical representations of early modern and nineteenth-century English women’s lives in relation to the public/private divide in “Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History”, *Historical Journal* 36:2 (1993), pp.383-414.

finance and the politics of state, religion and the professions and industry. Certainly amongst the Ferrars, who were very eager to live up to moral and social ideals, it was the men who maintained the business relationships by their visiting and correspondence, though they readily used, for example, the property-holding rights of women in the family when doing so was expedient.

At the same time the work of Susanna Collet and her mother Mary Ferrar at keeping up social connections by their letter-writing was significant. As has been stated, women's letter-writing was an activity sanctioned by convention. However pleasant their task was, and often quite likely based upon genuine affection and regard, the Ferrar women were participants in a feminine network of sociability that echoed and reinforced the masculine social hierarchy and thus on one level their correspondence had very pragmatic ends. Vivienne Larminie cautions the historian not to dismiss letters apparently expressing little but polite greetings as "being all rhetoric and no news", for "that seems to miss a vital point: important ties were being nourished, and it was the women of the family who were writing and keeping the correspondence."⁷² That the network was more frequently re-enacted in letters than in personal meetings does not render it any less powerful or less real.

The letters themselves were the indispensable medium for maintaining those broader associations of kinship and friendship that assured a family's social status. It was necessary for early modern English families, especially those living in the provinces, to cultivate a network of allies upon whom they could depend for a range of practical assistance. Favours might extend from providing a place to stay when visiting London or other parts of the country through to financial support and loans in times of need. Acquaintances were used to attain social advantage in practical matters such as the apprenticeship and marriage of children, as referred to above, and were often defined by common political conviction or, like the Ferrars and the Sandys in the Virginia Company, membership of a particular faction within a corporation or other institution. More nebulous but no less significant was the spiritual or ethical solidarity that could be communicated through letters, which must have acted as an important bolster to morale and a stay against geographical isolation, especially when the political and religious situation was turbulent. And very simply, friends' letters were a valuable source of information and news.

Parallel to the anxiety over social status which it has just been posited that the letters betray (through their concern with illness and as a means of keeping up relations with friends and kin) is the desire to regulate order *within* the family. Just as a death in the

⁷² Vivienne Larminie, "Fighting for Family in a Patronage Society: the Epistolary Armoury of Anne Newdigate (1574 – 1618)" in Daybell (ed.), *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing*, p.97.

family could create problems outside the household, so it could disrupt its internal organisation. The Ferrars never fail to check up on health, births, deaths and marriages in their letters because changes could upset the sites of domestic authority and the shape of daily routines. Aside from conventions of order, each individual had a religious duty to uphold the obligations and functions of a wife or uncle or daughter, and the wellbeing of the larger organism depended upon mutual performance of these roles. When discord erupts between individuals, correspondence is employed to arbitrate and to maintain cohesion. Thus the marital tensions between John and Bathsheba Ferrar are negotiated in letters, with Nicholas's involvement, and, as shown in chapter 1, Anna Collet's financial misdemeanours are revealed and punished in a closed series of letters exchanged between herself, her sister Mary and Nicholas. Such occurrences suggest that the written word had a degree of permanence or solemnity and privacy for the Ferrars when it was used to preserve order in the house.

The Little Gidding variation on the contemporary Protestant ideal of family was unique; not a dramatic deviation from the model, perhaps, but variant enough to inspire a particular wish to uphold the order that had been arrived at. It was also subject to the vagaries of illness and unforeseen occurrences as well as the change imposed by little better controlled life-cycle events (again, employment, marriages, births and deaths), forces the most exemplary of families could not hope to evade. One means of affirming and reaffirming the ordered family was to invoke the paradigms reflected in the conventions of letter writing. Set forms of address, subjects of discussion and expressions of concern and affection, for example, had evolved to correspond with the ideal roles of different family members. Just as the conventions of a bishop's letter to a parish priest might enshrine structurally an appropriate mixture of pastoral concern and admonition from a superior in the profession, so a mother's letter to her son working away from home engaged preformulated notions of the proper parent-child relationship. Thus Susanna Collet's letters to her sons Tom, Nick and Ned act out and re-enact an ideologically desirable relationship between them. In a letter to Tom written shortly after his marriage with Martha Sherington, reproduced here in its entirety, his mother assembles much of the family around the couple:

My Dear Son,

The Abundance of myne own gives me a full Satisfaction for the tenderness of your Mother[-in-law]'s Affections and I cannot wonder that she is so loth to part with her [daughter], whom I am so desirous to see: Your Uncle [Nicholas] tells Us your Journey is deferred till next week, your father means to meet you the first night, my disuse of Riding makes me unfit to accompany him, but my heart, as it

shall go along with him so you shall find it open here to receive your wife and to place her in thee Degree and Love of a Daughter: I can say no more, but that I will endeavour that she shall find no want of her mother, to whom remember my most respective and true Love, as also your Grandmothers and all others, and that but in so dear a pledg as your wife, we rest so well satisfyed of her Love, we should somewhat doubt that she had Some Suspicion either of Our Loves or otherways, that she denies the company[.] with your fathers and Grandmothers Blessing to you both, I rest —⁷³

Acts of writing, in cases like this applying the filters of epistolary convention in conjunction with model notions of family, may be understood as attempts to impose meaning upon idiosyncratic circumstances.

Together with their contact with broader kin and social groups, it is possible to view the letters of the Ferrar family as a live, complex network of relationships created and affirmed in the performance, communicating images that constitute an upright family. If the exchange of letters is understood as a vital means of inventing and sustaining the family, then it is possible more readily to comprehend the frequency of writing, the consistency of form and content, and the offence and worry generated when expected letters do not arrive – all of which obtain in the case of Mrs Collet’s repetitious letters to her children.

The acting out of family roles in correspondence can be related both to the Ferrars’ particular plight and to historical circumstances and mentalities current in England in the first half of the seventeenth century. Their wish for orderly, settled family life is quite comprehensible considering the difficulties they must have faced whilst establishing themselves in their new life at Little Gidding, particularly in view of their isolation and their financial troubles, together with their very earnest desire to live authentically as Christians. But it is also related to a fear of terrestrial disorder in the early-seventeenth century which is discernable in many texts and other artefacts of the culture, from the dark, unruly vision of revenge tragedy to the apocalyptic prophesying of sectaries.⁷⁴ From this context, emerging as a cultural effort to comprehend and offset its threat, came the “delight in disorder” aesthetic, combining a classical appreciation of moderate disarray with the character of traditional festal inversion with its “pressure valve” containment function

⁷³ Susanna Collet to Thomas Collet, July 1628, CL, fol 4^v.

⁷⁴ Many studies exist which focus on different manifestations of the perceived threat of disorder in early seventeenth-century England, for example: Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999; Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*, London: Temple Smith, 1972. Related works by literary scholars include: Leah Marcus, “Pastimes and the Purging of Theatre”, in David Scott Kaplan & Peter Stallybrass (eds), *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, New York & London: Routledge, 1991, pp.196-209; Annabel Patterson, “The very name of the game: theories of order and disorder”, in Thomas Healy & Jonathan Sawday (eds), *Literature and the English Civil War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp.21-37

preserving the social order; the same nostalgic, ritual chaos, inflected with a new threat, suffuses the Smithfield of *Bartholomew Fair* and the “underworld” of rampant vagabondage and crime depicted in coney-catching pamphlets.⁷⁵ Further, the Ferrars lived in a society preoccupied with matters of status, in which it was important to know at all times one’s – and other people’s – place in the pecking order. They sought the ordered society which Susan Amussen has described.⁷⁶ Such evidence adds to the argument that with each rehearsal of the protocols of family – here in the rhetorical structure of letters to family and kin – the Ferrars are cleaving to a cultural ideal in an effort to reassure themselves that their microcosmic society, the household, is stable and operating smoothly and that disorder is kept at bay.

Moreover, social rank was performative. Acts of obeisance characterised social and religious relationships throughout the middle ages, from feudal rites such as homage to rituals specific to the priesthood, and these cultural practices persisted in post-Reformation England, transformed and increasingly sited in secular contexts in accordance with Protestant ideology.⁷⁷ At the top of the social hierarchy, rituals associated with royalty were developed and a mystical dimension encouraged by the Stuart insistence upon the divine right of kings.⁷⁸ However, it may be suggested that the reformers’ insistence that gracious actions proceeded irresistibly from the just Christian – effectively, that the person who behaves most like a Christian is proven to be one – reinforced the principle that a person’s nature was attested by outward signs. Just as being a good Christian meant acting like one, being a good father meant acting like one, and being noble meant acting appropriately. Rules for conduct and ceremonies existed pertaining to states as diverse and all-encompassing as gender, office, and profession. The enormous literature of advice concerning parenting and the proper behaviour of a gentleman or woman, for example, and its proliferation into the eighteenth century, suggests that the performative aspects of social identity were acknowledged and the phenomenon experienced no decline. The negative corollary that such a system implies is that states of being – Christian, father, gentleman, and so on – are unstable and can be feigned. Again, this hazard was negotiated in various cultural media. Mistaken appearances are the stuff of many plays of the period, and it is only in fictional provinces steeped in romantic heritage that essence prevails over

⁷⁵ Robert Herrick is the most notable exponent of the “delight in disorder” aesthetic. On Herrick and the movement to preserve traditional pastimes: Leah S. Marcus, *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell and the Defence of the Old Holiday Pastimes*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

⁷⁶ Amussen, *An Ordered Society*.

⁷⁷ The obvious exception in the ecclesiastical sphere was of course the Laudian movement with its ritualism and emphasis on the ceremonies of priesthood and episcopacy.

⁷⁸ Roy Strong has written extensively on royal imagery and ritual in early modern England. See especially the collected essays in *The Tudor and Stuart Monarchy: Pageantry, Painting, Iconography*, 3 vols, Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1997. Volume 3 deals with the Stuarts.

conflicting appearance, Perdita's case in *The Winter's Tale* being one of many instances. The danger that appearances might be deceptive issued in a fear that never wholly dissipated, carrying on particularly in the well-known puritan distrust of the magical space of theatre and its transformations, and in the suspicion of speciously-linked practices like magic and priest-craft.

Functions of the Correspondence Network

The preceding section has shown that form, or genre, is a crucial consideration in the study of letters owing to the role of conventions of structure and address in reflecting and reinforcing the order imposed upon the universe by hierarchical early modern discourses of gender, religion and society. Bearing these facts in mind, it is necessary to consider the practice of letter-writing once more, this time conceiving of it as a series of repeated actions performed by individuals who are subsumed in a dynamic network of correspondents. In this way it is possible to develop answers to the question of the functions of letter-writing, and the functions of letter-writing networks.

The letter-writers at Little Gidding represented in the archive were introduced above. The Ferrar correspondence network comprised immediate family members both at Little Gidding and in geographically separate marital households or the households where they were lodged for apprenticeship; the families of in-laws, such as the parents and siblings of women married to Ferrar sons; relatives and kin spread throughout England, for example Woodnoths in Cheshire, Cornwall and London; business associates and friends such as Sir Edwin and Lady Katherine Sandys; and the particular friends or acquaintances of individuals, for example Nicholas' colleagues at Cambridge. These different sorts of correspondents did not occupy sharply distinct or mutually exclusive categories. Just as the relationships were multidimensional and flexible – Arthur Woodnoth was simultaneously friend, relative and business associate to Nicholas – so the content and tone of the letters was variously personal or formal and pragmatic. Kin, friends and acquaintances were all involved in the affective, social and material sustenance of the family; the business of subsistence had many facets that were pursued together, simultaneously and frequently in the same act (that is, the same letter).⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Researching letter-writing networks in nineteenth-century Sweden, Hasselberg found provincial ironworks owner Gustav Clason's situation to be similar, arguing that any distinction between his social and economic correspondence, and therefore social and economic networks, is false, and that correspondents had multidimensional relationships and as such cannot be divided into public and private or business and personal categories. "Letters, social networks and the embedded economy in Sweden", p.100.

Within the network different people write to each other and the significances of individual epistles and particular correspondence relationships vary. The bulk of correspondence in the Ferrar network passed between members of the family itself, consisting of everyday business transactions and enquiries about the physical and spiritual welfare of each individual. The particular epistolary relationships between Nicholas Ferrar and Arthur Woodnoth, and between Mary and Anna Collet and Nicholas Ferrar respectively, will form the basis for discussion in the next two chapters. There is a constant effort to maintain all relationships, including those contacts whose primary function appears to be social leverage – “connections”. Consistent with Heal and Holmes’s comments on the significance of female sociability amongst the gentry, this seems for the most part to be the work, if not the interest, of women, particularly those exchanges that take place apparently without an explicit object such as communicating a piece of news or a request.⁸⁰ The phenomenon is best illustrated by Susanna Collet’s letters to well-to-do and socially superior female acquaintances, including the Lady Bodley, Lady Smart, Lady Mary Knatchbull, Lady Mary Thomas and her kinswoman Lady Hester Aucher. Reciprocal visiting was customary and an important aspect of enacting and affirming relationships like these in spite of the impediment of distance, and Susanna’s letters commonly state her intention to go and see friends. Nonetheless in many instances the very same letters and others which simply send notice of regard transparently take the place of real visits. Mrs Collet seldom left Little Gidding.

Having considered the Ferrar correspondence network in its broadest formation and seeing the sorts of written relationships that existed between family members, it remains to determine just what this network does. The argument of this chapter, then, can be articulated as follows. Firstly, the constant communication between members of the Ferrar family through their letter network demonstrates their anxiety to possess at all times up-to-date knowledge of the constitution or shape of the family, and of its condition. A family (like a household) in satisfactory order, properly organised and functioning according to hierarchical ideals, was one stay against the inevitable uncertainty and mutability of terrestrial existence, the predicament that so vexed people living in the seventeenth century. It is important not to underestimate the enormous significance of a good family in early modern England, in terms of practical social survival but further, looking deeper, because of how it was imbued with cultural, religious and cosmological consequence. But the family was not a stable entity. Its members did not all live in the same place so it was impossible at any given point in time to know how all persons fared, how they were behaving, or indeed whether they were still part of the network: the composition

⁸⁰ Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, pp.94-5.

of the family could change at any moment because of births, deaths and marriages as well as shame, imprisonment, exile or emigration. Individuals' positions within the family were not fixed either; rather, roles and status changed as they aged and entered different life-cycle phases, marrying, working, parenting and so on. Theories that conceive of the family as a process rather than as an entity have substantial purchase in the context of these facts.⁸¹ The transmission of letters was an unending effort to trace the shape of the family, to gauge its state, so as to derive, ideally, a momentary sensation of fixity and control.

Secondly, letter-writing was very much an everyday practice for people like the Ferrars. Rehearsing and repeating the conventions of correspondence again and again with minor variations in the daily work of maintaining personal, family and practical or business relations, the notions of order that these generic patterns of control represent were naturalised and reified. It was by these acts of writing, each in its very structure validating and reinforcing both the attendant values of gender, societal and cosmic order and demanding of the carriers of different family roles (for example parents, children, spouses) the performance of ideal behaviour, that the family was made.

Letter-writing is a statement about the family. By writing, its members enact their given family roles and their relationship to others, and they describe their family geography with the paths of their letters. The significance of constituent relationships within the web of family is the subject of the ensuing chapters.

⁸¹ Richard Grassby advocates studying "the process of family life" in "Love, Property and Kinship", p.335. Members of the medieval households research group at the University of York apply a similar notion in the historical study of households. See for example Sarah Rees-Jones's explanation of the multiple and overlapping meanings of household and householding in medieval parlance, one of these being "a set of personal and social processes". The same could be said of "family". "Introduction" in Sarah Rees Jones et al., "The Later Medieval English Urban Household", *History Compass* 5:1 (Nov 2006), p.121 [doi:10.1111/j.1478-0542.2006.00364.x].

6 Spiritualised relationships: Anna Collet, Nicholas Ferrar and Mary Collet

The relationships between the three unmarried celibates at Little Gidding, the sisters Anna and Mary Collet, and their uncle Nicholas Ferrar, were highly religious in character and form the subject of this chapter, based on what can be discerned from their surviving correspondence. The phenomenon of celibacy at Little Gidding was addressed in relation to the practice of religion in chapter 3. In the present discussion, it is not the theological merit or otherwise of the married state that is at issue, but rather Mary, Anna and Nicholas's position at once as never-married persons and as members of the same family and household, and, as such, how they related to one another. The devotional discourse they shared shaped their relational dynamics: simultaneously their relationships evolved and they moulded the spiritual language to suit their circumstances, and through the process they developed their identities as single people and accommodated themselves within the more conventional patriarchal, marriage-oriented framework of household and family.

Families that appear to conform, in structure and constituent interpersonal relationships, to these patriarchal ideals, are better represented in the historiography concerning the early modern English family; hence the conception of such familial organisation as normative is perpetuated. And certainly, the case of unmarried sisters Mary and Anna Collet bears out once more what Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford have stated with regard to recovering the history of unmarried women in early modern England: "The sources are biased towards the obedient, pious single woman."¹ Yet this instance shows the work that was involved in meeting that virtuous ideal and projecting the appearance of virtue. While Mary, Anna and Nicholas experienced the force that gendered ideals exerted to promote conformity, and actively sought to comply with them, their case shows that different arrangements of power and affect related to gender and sexuality did exist in seventeenth-century families.

As Amy Froide has argued in her monograph *Never Married*, marital status, and in particular singleness, are important analytical categories in historical research, and the experiences of never-married women (and men) merit further historiographical attention.² The evidence of Mary and Anna Collet's situation and their relationships with Nicholas Ferrar bears out Froide's claims that singlewomen were deeply involved with and valued by their natal families, and that, though they did not have husbands or their own children,

¹ Mendelson & Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, p.166.

² For this argument and a historiographical discussion of previous work through which Froide offers a series of reasons why more work is warranted, see Introduction, *Never Married*, pp.1-14.

their ties with kin and personal relationships with nieces, cousins, aunts and uncles were very significant.³ Froide hopes that one of the outcomes of substituting singleness for the conjugal relationship as the central term of analysis will be to uncover facts that challenge the early modern paradigm of patriarchy, and the associated “nuclear” family form assuming the domestic mastery of the husband. “While the ideal ... may have been for women to dedicate themselves to conjugal and maternal roles,” she states, “in reality not all women could or chose to do so.”⁴ The findings from applying this rationale to Little Gidding indicate that, if Mary and Anna Collet chose not to marry and bear children (and arguably at least for Mary hers was a choice made of necessity), they certainly did not eschew many aspects of the roles of wife and mother, which were inseparable from normative adult femininity. Crucially though, the sisters were not “free from the control of a male relative.” Mary and Anna negotiated their identities as unmarried women above all in relation to their uncle, Nicholas. His role was a variable and ambiguous one, combining elements of pastor, father and spouse.

Reconfiguring familial relationships to accommodate singleness: spirituality, affect and the parent-child paradigm

In order to live unmarried, Mary and Anna Collet adopted a new spiritual relationship to Nicholas Ferrar which displaced their conventional family relationship as nieces and uncle: they became his spiritual daughters, and he their ghostly father. The habit of assuming the postures of father and daughters in the language of their correspondence predates the formalisation of their new identities. As early as 1626 Anna was gravitating towards regular use of the terminology of paternity with respect to Nicholas:

Deare Unckle my harte doth wittnesse that your love to mee hath not bine unequall to the love of a moste Deare parent: In the greate Care you have extended on mee for the happiness of my Soull and Body For you have not ceased butt continually Laboured to sowe the Good Seede of Grace In my harte by your holsome Counsels and Fatherly Instructions which I have often Received From you⁵

Before she married, their sister Susanna used similar expressions, too. In one letter of early July, 1627, she gave thanks to Nicholas for the gift of his fatherliness, and contrasted it

³ Froide, *Never Married*, esp. ch.3, *passim*.

⁴ Froide, *Never Married*, p.7.

⁵ Anna Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 13 Nov 1626, FP, r3, 601[670], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.246-7.

with her youthful folly.⁶ His response was full of paternalistic advice, for example pointing out the necessity of her following others' guidance to escape the worldly "labyrinth" and that she should behave submissively and obediently, yet he was careful to defer to the importance of her parents' influence in setting her on a good course.⁷ In a letter to him penned that same month, Anna left a clue as to the nature of the attachment to him that Nicholas was fostering in the sisters by promoting their letter-writing.⁸ Her postscript suggests that he had established all of those able in the task of writing to him as a spiritual discipline. Such a notion is corroborated by letters such as that of 30 July 1632, signed by Anna, Hester and Margaret together, jointly rendering their weekly duty to the "Most honored & Carefull Father of [their] Souls".⁹ The overall tone of Anna's letter is effusive and betrays her unequivocally competitive approach to gaining his attention. She was successful, and second only to Mary in inducing from him "favours equalling the love of a most dear father."¹⁰

Anna wrote more emotive letters to Nicholas than did Mary. Perhaps unable to equal the standard set by her sister, whose many responsibilities reflected her elevated status and Nicholas's almost unvarying approbation, Anna used her letters to confess weaknesses and admit transgressions, regularly pouring out grief at her own failings and petitioning Nicholas for forgiveness and advice. She sought his love fervently, and constructed a scenario in which he, her temporal and spiritual father who had provided her with worldly shelter and also "an Eternall habitation",¹¹ was the only person who could help to save her from her "imbecility of nature".¹² Self-doubt and a desire for acceptance were more strongly characteristic of Anna than of the other women at Little Gidding, but there is no question that her "imbecility of nature" was a failing inseparable from her gender. On occasion she chose metaphors to articulate her feelings which may appear to the modern reader as sexual in connotation. A letter addressed to her "Father Uncle" contains an outstanding paean to Nicholas, her "dear & honoured father", in gratitude for the abundant seed he has sown in the furrows of her heart. Secondary praise is offered to

⁶ Susanna Collet jun. to Nicholas Ferrar, 2 Jul 1627, FP, r4, 618[2]. See also Susanna Collet jun. to Nicholas Ferrar, 25 May 1628, FP, r4, 643[53].

⁷ Nicholas Ferrar to Susanna Collet jun., 5 Jul 1627, FP, r4, 620[6].

⁸ Writing about the relationship between Jeanne de Chantal and her confessor François de Sales, Ruth Manning remarks on the fact that the exchange of letters created more closeness and invited freer expression, encouraging greater intimacy. "A Confessor and His Spiritual Child: François de Sales, Jeanne de Chantal, and the Foundation of the Order of the Visitation" in Ruth Harris & Lyndal Roper (eds), *The Art of Survival: Gender and History in Europe, 1450-2000: Essays in Honour of Olwen Hufton*, Oxford: Oxford Journals, 2006, p.108.

⁹ Anna, Hester and Margaret Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 30 July 1632, FP, r5, 863[34].

¹⁰ Anna Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 7 Jul 1627, FP, r4, 621[8].

¹¹ Anna Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 27 Jan 1629, FP, r4, 660[90].

¹² Anna Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 25 Feb 1628, FP, r4, 636[37].

God who gives increase.¹³ Intentional innuendo is implausible here and it is highly likely that the origin of her language is biblical, but in such instances it is important that historians neither ignore the possibility of sexual overtones, nor develop a habit of seeing sublimated sexual interest at every turn.¹⁴

Nicholas responded by pledging to his “dearest Nan” to work at being worthy of the praises she heaped upon him. The two had just converted their relationship into that of “father” and “daughter” in earnest and evidently they were pleased with the transformation, hence Anna’s unrestrained letter. Nicholas’s reply is worth reproducing at length; his own words offer the most explicit illustration of the nature of the singular arrangement between uncle and niece.

And by gods grace I shall indeavor by the best Love & greatest Care that I can for your good to deserve and requite the Affection & honnour which you give mee even to the full measure and proportion of that mutuall Relation newly expressed betweene us. for as for the thing it selfe it hath been on my parte of Longe continuance that I have Loved you with the selfe same affections both for measure and kynde as in myne owne apprension you were to mee much more daughter then Neice. But now that by your owne desyre you have made mee your father there seemes to mee nothing wanting to the perfecting of this bonde that it should bee any ways less than yf it had been naturall but rather more being not imposed by necessity of nature but contracted by the choyse of Judgement, grounded not on participation of bloude but on the communion of spiritts and tending to the perfection of the myndes much more then to the suply and increase of worldly Comforts¹⁵.

Nicholas’s statement betrays a quantitative notion of affection, which was conceived of as a commodity that could and ought to be apportioned by degrees according to a scale that took into account both merit (the recipient’s moral status) and propriety (the conventional affinity of the parties). Nicholas did not claim real insight into paternity, stating that his love for Anna was by his “owne apprension” more like that for a daughter than a niece, but he did thereby claim higher status in relation to her. The paradigm of no other family relationship supplied both an apposite description of their bond and enhanced Nicholas’s power, and neither could he have assumed any other model with impunity. ‘Uncle and niece’ was unsatisfactory, but ‘siblings’ was not fit, and ‘husband and wife’ was certainly impossible. The love of a father was safe, just as his dispensation of advice was definitive. The reconfiguration of conventional family relationships was only possible by the interaction of empowered senior male party with junior females. Likewise, the masculine

¹³ Anna Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 15 Jun 1629, FP, r4, 675[121].

¹⁴ See for example Ps. 65.

¹⁵ Nicholas Ferrar to Anna Collet, 18 Jun 1629, FP, r4, 676[123-4], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.251-2.

authority and paternity implicit in holy orders was crucial to the rearrangement of Nicholas's relationships with his adult nieces, bolstered by the pastor's traditional privileged, intimate access to the innermost reaches of his charges' souls. It is difficult to imagine the inverse, where a relationship between a senior female and a junior male was transformed; perhaps, for all its various forms and its influence, maternity was not so powerful or flexible.

Nicholas's expressions of affection for Anna were more temperate than were hers for him, as befitted the rationality of a man and a teacher, and through which he complied with the standard, promoted as part of the household religious rationale, of not permitting oneself to be strongly moved by passions. Yet he was very demonstrative at times: "My daughter in the best and dearest of Fatherhood, Both my Love that embraceth every thing with Joy that coms from you and your owne Love that hath filled it with sweetness made your Letter moast welcomm".¹⁶ Notwithstanding the fact that the internal dynamics of Anna and Nicholas's relationship were reciprocal, nurtured by mutual efforts, his will enabled their "newly expressed" relation. Anna's enthusiasm alone could not have effected the change. Statements such as "now that by your owne desyre you have made mee your father" were calculated to give the impression of equality and consent. And irrespective of his intentions, by fixing all the Collet sisters in the habit of writing to him for spiritual supervision, Nicholas had encouraged the intense commitment that evolved in Anna and Mary.

Passages such as the one that follows demonstrate the tactics Nicholas employed in sustaining his connection with Anna by correspondence; the exchange of letters matches the reciprocity of Christian witness. Nicholas explains that he is pleased because her letter proves that she understands both her debt to God for his abundant grace and that she must therefore offer thankful praise. "And to the furtherance thereof as your Letter is to mee a practicall Example soe shall you receive from mee a litle booke of excellent direction & incitement".¹⁷ The maintenance of an economy of obligation and the giving of favours were powerful strategies of engagement, as was the high value that their "father in heart" placed on the sisters' proving their dedication:

I am exceedingly joyde to understand by your good Unkles [John Ferrar's] letter the constant progress of your Last begunn courses Although as I perceave with greate encumbrances of mynde and Impediments through Infirmyty of body ...

¹⁶ Nicholas Ferrar to Anna Collet, 4 Mar 1630, FP, r4, 713[198-9], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.249-50. (Blackstone's suggested date of 4 Mar 1629 is the old-style date written on the letter.)

¹⁷ Nicholas Ferrar to Anna Collet, 4 Mar 1630, FP, r4, 713[198-9], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.249-50.

For now I know you truly indeavor that which both The outward Man is soe refractory unto and the Devill soe maliciously bente against¹⁸.

Nicholas acclaimed their dedication as sign of their exceptional merit, given that in his understanding (which he simultaneously reinforced by his statement) their gender was construed as naturally obstructing intelligence and virtue.

Mary Collet was, at times, able to interact with Nicholas more as his equal than as his inferior. When he wished to acknowledge parity between them, Nicholas substituted the horizontal metaphor of siblings for the hierarchical language of father and daughter. “Brother” and “sister” may have echoed the customary designations of regular religious, but they were also general terms that expressed spiritual equality and fitting titles for relatives separated in age by only eight years. In July 1632 Nicholas was away from Little Gidding, and Mary wrote to him concerning various matters of business then in progress and passed on the good wishes of the family. But she also revealed her particular investment in his vision, expressing her frustration at the impediments that had “hitherto hindred from puting into Execution those desinges which ha[d] been soe long in Agetation”, adding a promise to “endeavor a more faithfull & Diligent serveing of” God if he removed the obstacles.¹⁹ She addressed Nicholas as “Father of my soule faithfull friend” and “deare Father”. Nicholas replied with the salutation “My sister of my soule”, transforming the exchange such that it suggested partnership. He offered some firm words of assurance, but rather than adopting a thoroughgoing paternalistic or admonitory tone, he presented a gentler persona in his letter, and signed off “Your brother”.

When I am with you I am full of care but in absence it is more An Anxious Sollicitousness possesseth mee whilst I consider the greatness and goodness of your Attemptes – And the much and sore opposition That undoubtedly is preepared for you – But bee of Good Comfort²⁰.

Nicholas’s spiritual paternity had very real effects upon Mary and Anna’s relationships with their biological father and other relatives. John Collet was subordinate to Nicholas and probably also to John Ferrar in the household at Little Gidding, unseated from the headship he would have enjoyed if his wife and dependent children were living in circumstances more conventional than they did there with the extended family. Collet was displaced by Nicholas and furthermore virtually cuckolded by him, for his wife Susanna

¹⁸ Nicholas Ferrar to Anna Collet, 4 Mar 1630, FP, r4, 713[198-9], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.249-50.

¹⁹ Mary Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 23 Jul 1632, FP, r5, 860[28-9], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.272-3. The restoration of Leighton Bromswold church was underway at this time and may have been their principal care.

²⁰ Nicholas Ferrar to Mary Collet, 25 Jul 1632, FP, r5, 861[31], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, p.274.

was given to deferring to her brother's authority rather than that of her husband. At Little Gidding, the Ferrar name and lineage were privileged above his own. To a significant extent, Collet's daughters substituted identifying through their mother and uncle's family for identification with their father's line, demonstrated most starkly in the unmarried sisters' (above all Mary, and also Hester) singular practice of adopting the name Ferrar in place of their own surname, or occasionally appending it to Collet. For Hester, and her younger sisters should they have likewise designated themselves, the substitution was temporary, annulled when a husband's surname superseded it at marriage.²¹ But Mary renounced her Collet title permanently, signing her name Mary Ferrar, and even her will is listed as that of "Mary Farrer, alias Collet". Various historians since have referred to her, not without confusion, as Mary Ferrar junior.

In styling herself "Mary Ferrar", Mary attached herself overtly to her uncle and spiritual father, Nicholas, who set the design for living at Little Gidding, and she also fostered the illusion of identity with her grandmother, Mary Ferrar. By a remarkable ritual, Mary was installed as "Mother" of the Little Academy on St Luke's Day, 1632, replacing her namesake grandmother as the patron of the enterprise and taking on the functional captaincy too.²² Despite being childless, she was chief of the maternal figures in the household by virtue of her executive role and her intimacy with Nicholas. Her grandmother and her mother Susanna Collet were senior in dignity, but Mary enjoyed Nicholas's confidence and in practical regards she had greater power and more responsibilities than they did. For example, Nicholas discussed his plans for solving her brother Ned's apprenticeship troubles with Mary and her uncle John Ferrar before sharing them with Ned and Mary's parents, Susanna and John Collet.²³ In keeping with the deference owed to the older women, they were relieved from usual housekeeping duties, an arrangement which appears to have worked to divert from them some everyday influence.

That the elder daughters, now growing to women's estate, might be fully accomplished, even with civility, for worldly employment when God called them to it and their minds to it, Nicholas Ferrar, both to take off all worldly cares of house from both his aged mother and well beloved dear sister that now also grew in years, and that they might be the more ready to attend the better things, he so ordered and appointed that, there being in the house four of his sister's daughters capable of house government ... each sister in her month should take the charge of the whole government of the house in all that appertained unto it.²⁴

²¹ The following letter is signed "Hester Collett Farrar": Hester Collet to Joshua Mapletoft, 5 Dec 1631, FP, r4, 828[516].

²² Sharland, *Story Books*, St Luke 1632, pp.154-65.

²³ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 25 April 1631, FP, r4, 778[374-9].

²⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.86. The division between menial tasks and "better things" is reminiscent of the distinction between Martha and Mary. See also John Ferrar to Mary Ferrar, 20 & 26 Feb 1629, FP, r4, 665[102-5], in which John exempts his mother from all work in the interests of her health.

As described in chapter 2, the sisters kept cows, managed the household accounts, controlled the family's provisions, and organised the servants, amongst other tasks.

John Collet was on a par with his daughters spiritually, rather than being superior to them as their father, in so far as, like them, he was engaged in the business of seeking greater personal holiness. His return to the Little Academy was noted especially in the introduction to the transcript of the discussion of mortality that took place at the beginning of 1633.

The Resolved, who in the want of Roome at first gave way to others for the better Exercize of their Vertues, returnes now in the want of Companie for the perfection of his own better promotion of the Action. And to that intent moves, That every one should be bound to the performance of what they spake, Making their practizes keep equall place to their Discourses.²⁵

A solemn promise followed (and was later written down) to formalise the commitment Collet urged. He did not speak in the ensuing dialogue, though elsewhere was a co-actor with his children in the storying, a naïve presence rather than the authoritative one that his supervisory role may lead the reader to anticipate.²⁶ He seldom appears in the archive dispensing the “holsome Counsels and Fatherly Instructions” that might be expected of a devout father. Nicholas, in contrast, constantly gave advice, declaring, for example, that he would gain as much from directing Anna's spiritual growth as she would by conforming to his prescriptions:

in regarde of that which I purpose and hope by Gods grace to bee to you wards in the searche and study of true wisdomm and perfection in Christ Jesus, Not as a Master but as a Partener and fellow studente with you, Assuredly expecting to bee as much benifitted my selfe by the Example of your ready and zealous Practize as you hope to bee fathered by the meanes of my Constante Admonitions and Instructions²⁷.

Nicholas's disavowal of the position of “master” in their relationship might have accorded with his Christian ideals and the principle of equality that he promoted amongst the Collet sisters, and therefore obtained, in theory, on a spiritual level; yet his claim to being Anna's “fellow studente” was a strategy to encourage candour and loyalty and did not reflect the reality of their empowerment vis-à-vis one another. John Collet was not so bold in asserting his equality with his daughters, but in the context of his brother-in-law's influence, he was in practice consigned to a similar rank.

²⁵ Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, p.110.

²⁶ See for example the nature of his participation in “The Winding Sheet” dialogue, Williams, *Conversations*, Part VII, pp.100-117, esp. p.112.

²⁷ Nicholas Ferrar to Anna Collet, 1 Jun 1631, FP, r4, 788[406], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.258-9.

Whilst the scope of affective relations that John Collet's paternal role might have enabled him to maintain with his daughters was being curtailed, the quasi father-daughter relationship between Nicholas and Anna and Mary stretched the nature of their interaction. The degree of confidence between the three was more extensive than what was generally sanctioned between young women and non-parental male relatives (especially given that their father was neither deceased nor estranged), and moreover was maximal in terms of close contact between biological, adoptive or step-fathers and their daughters at the time. It allowed for enhanced intimacy: an increased degree of disclosure on the part of the women and sharper scrutiny and more insistent advice for spiritual improvement from Nicholas. Anna and Mary gained attention from the head of the household and the basis of their loyalty to him was a familiarity that supplemented conventional duty and respect. They occupied positions of responsibility in the day-to-day operations of the household, no doubt adding to their workload. They maintained proximity to the man in whose exceptional sanctity they believed, and he invested effort in their spiritual welfare: there was give and take within the relationships. But at the root, the model established them unequivocally in their respective positions of superior and inferiors. "To the submission and obedience whereof that you make soe faithfull promise as it adds to my hopes touching your happy progress in the best way", wrote Nicholas, "soe god willing it shall add to my care and Dilligence to bee a righte and true Guide unto you".²⁸

Adopting a father-daughter paradigm asexualised the relationships between the sisters and their uncle, which befitted their religious character of their associations if not extinguishing the possibility of sexually-inappropriate dimensions outright. Nicholas's role as "father" evoked not only the venerable father of contemporary Christian ideals, and the string of patriarchs behind him in the Christian inheritance, but also emulated the tradition of pastoral relationships between priests and (female) parishioners, not least those between women, including nuns, and their confessors.²⁹ As Bernard Blackstone observed in his introductory note to the selection of family letters published in his 1937 volume *The Ferrar Papers*, "[t]he epistles to and from the elder of the Collett sisters at Gidding throw light on Nicholas's genius as a ghostly father."³⁰ Negative Catholic connotations would have been likely, and especially damaging if a substantial impression of Mary and Anna's intimacy with Nicholas escaped from the confines of the family. Yet the overall effect was to project the image of a connection that was legitimate and proper. Various positive parallels were

²⁸ Nicholas Ferrar to Anna Collet, 1 Jun 1631, FP, r4, 788[406], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.258-9.

²⁹ For comparison, see Ellen A. Macek's study of the relationships between English Catholic women and their confessors: "'Ghostly Fathers' and their 'Virtuous Daughters': The Role of Spiritual Direction in the Lives of Three Early Modern English Women", *Catholic Historical Review* 90:2 (Apr 2004), pp.213-35.

³⁰ Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, p.226.

available in the current practice of godly ministers providing spiritual mentoring for women, such as the relationship that Peter Lake has described existed between Jane Ratcliffe and her pastor, as well as in historical instances acknowledged as elements of Protestant heritage, for example Calvin's written exchanges with women of the French court.³¹ More than simply reflecting such traditional arrangements, Mary and Anna's individual relationships with Nicholas *were* relationships of spiritual counsel between a woman and a clergyman, if one only in minor orders.

Mary and Anna were Nicholas's spiritual progeny, and the celibate sisters carried on to have spiritual children of their own. In the first place they supervised the routine of the children of the household, focusing on their religious and moral formation. Their responsibility towards the local children who came to Little Gidding to learn Psalms was of similar effect if more diffuse.³² But most significantly, these unwed, childless women came to have special charge of some of their sister Susanna Mapletoft's children. Su suffered from recurrent illnesses, strongly associated with her pregnancies, and struggled to care for her growing brood of very young children. Mall (Mary, b.1629) was sent to Little Gidding to live with her mother's family, and Nan (Anne, b.c.1623-8, Joshua Mapletoft's daughter with his first wife, Margaret Legatt) and John (b. 1631) probably also spent periods of time there. Mall Mapletoft was placed under the care of her aunt Mary Collet. At the beginning of October 1633, Su wrote to express her gratitude to Mary for taking on little Mall, declaring that her daughter would have a superior spiritual guardian in Mary and that Mary would have a successor and a child in her namesake, Mall, who, Su said, had taken the better part in life just as her foster mother had done.³³

Anna and Mary thus entered into a state of spiritual parenthood, without marriage or sexual contact, which corresponded with Nicholas's role as their spiritual father. They inherited, as it were, the capacity to guide and nurture the children in religion from him, as distinct from the combination of physical, emotional and spiritual childrearing skills that constituted maternal care which they would have learned from their mother (and other female relatives). It is not possible to judge whether they engaged in intense religious mentoring with their foster children as the surviving correspondence indicates Nicholas did with them. The general, less-concentrated duties of administering the daily round of all the Little Gidding children put Mary and Anna in a position inferior to yet more or less analogous with Nicholas's spiritual directorship of the whole family. In addition, Mary took

³¹ Peter Lake, "Feminine Piety and Personal Potency: The 'Emancipation' of Mrs Jane Ratcliffe", *Seventeenth Century* 2 (1987), pp.143-63.

³² Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.71.

³³ Susanna Mapletoft to Mary Collet, 3 Oct 1633, FP, r5, 911[430-31]. Little Mall seems to have "taken" the better path simply by being packed off to Little Gidding.

a special interest in monitoring her sister Su's spiritual improvement, tending towards condescension as she alternately pressed Su to be more conscientious or expressed pleasure at hearing of her progress.³⁴

An episode from the extended storying session of 1631 that was devoted to the retirement of Charles V illustrates Mary's "parenthood" operating in the special context of the Little Academy. Having heard about the Holy Roman Emperor's special care for his namesake "nephew"³⁵, the Guardian, John Ferrar, was moved to discuss his own strategy for educating his children, in particular his son, Nicholas, then 11 years old. He called for the approbation and support of the company in the task, as virtual "goodsibs".³⁶ Mary, in her guise as Cheife, feigned hesitancy to cooperate with him unless her "son" too could be schooled under the Guardian's scheme.

Whereupon beckoning to her son, that stood next to the Guardians, a child of the same Age, when he was come to her [Mary Collet] rising up she led him to the Guardian [John Ferrar], & with a low Reverence making Tender of his hand, I recommend (sayd shee) Honoured Guardian, in the most Affectionate & Powerfull kind that I may, this restlesse Care of mine to your hands, That he may by your Love be admitted to a free & constant participation of that Singular Benefitt, which you have promised your own, of dayly instructions & Teachings.

Ah (sayd the Guardian) this is a matter, the Exercize whereof belongs only to a mans own.³⁷

Why then (sayd the Resolved [John Collet]) since you cannot goe back from what you have promised, That you may the better & more Easily performe it, you shall doe well to take him for your own. For I dare assure you this Course will in the end make you so accompt him.

You see how truly & deeply her Love & maintenance hath engrafted him into the Cheifes heart, that she perswades herself not only us, that she is indeed his Mother.³⁸

Mary's "son" is not named. Williams suggests that he "may possibly have been Ralph Woodnoth", the son of John and Margaret Woodnoth, sent from Cheshire to live at Little Gidding.³⁹ Equally he might have been Mary's younger brother, Ferrar Collet, who

³⁴ Mary Collet to Susanna Mapletoft (draft), 18 Jan 1630, FP, r4, 700[172]. See also Mary Collet to Susanna Mapletoft, 21 Sep 1629, FP, r4, 687[147], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.253-3 but with authorship misattributed to Nicholas Ferrar.

³⁵ The boy in question was actually Charles V's grandson, Don Carlos (1545-68), son of Phillip II. Williams, *Conversations*, p.101, n.1.

³⁶ For the period in question there is no apparent evidence regarding god-parenting in the Ferrar family.

³⁷ Compare this point with Nicholas enforcing the principle of parents' duty to catechize their children in relation to the "psalm children" in chapter 3, p.90.

³⁸ Williams, *Conversations*, p.116.

³⁹ Williams, *Conversations*, p.116, n.1.

was born in 1618, similar in age to his cousin Nicholas and together with him a favourite student of their uncle Nicholas Ferrar. A letter of January 1630 concerning family finances reveals that Mary had been providing the means to maintain “Far” and Judith, two of the youngest Collet children, for the previous two years, presumably from the money she had inherited from her grandfather, Nicholas Ferrar sen.⁴⁰ John Collet jun., born in 1621 between Ferrar and Judith, also fits it terms of age, but there is no other evidence of a special relationship between him and Mary. The boy could not have been one of the Mapletoft children, as Susanna and Joshua’s first son, John, was born in June 1631.

Whoever Mary’s “son” was, it seems that the family was willing to entertain a notion of parenthood based on responsibility and affection for a child rather than the child’s status as the biological progeny of a parent. Specific precedent for Mary’s involvement in these arrangements existed in her own childhood experience, having been cared for by her grandfather, Nicholas Ferrar sen., just as Margaret, one of her younger sisters, had been the charge of their grandmother, Mary Ferrar. An elastic, expansive conception of adults’ duty of care towards children like this one did not jettison the parental model of particular adults’ responsibility for specific children, yet made less stringent distinctions on the basis of birth parents. It would have been practical in the composite Ferrar-Collet household, which was heterogeneous in constitution and certainly not based on a sole married couple and their genetic offspring.⁴¹ The transference and sharing of parental status and functions were sensible means of harnessing adult resources, material and otherwise, for childcare, and were facilitated by their membership of one extended family: the basic duty of care was already in place. The practice also agreed with the heightened value placed on corporate unity that was central to the Little Gidding ideal.

Singlewomen negotiating masculine power

A feature unique to Mary and Anna Collet’s correspondence was the exchange of letters between themselves within the household at Little Gidding, and the connected habit of committing letters addressed to third parties to one another’s custody. The sister charged with relaying the missive typically kept it for some length of time before passing it on to the addressee. The first surviving example of this deferred, collaborative method of written communication is a letter dated 10 June 1626, about the time when the family chose to

⁴⁰ Nicholas Ferrar to John Ferrar, with reply by John Ferrar and Mary Ferrar, 15 Jan 1630, FP, r4, 699[170-1]. See discussion in chapter 2, p.80.

⁴¹ It may be argued, though, that a married couple was held up as a symbol of the importance of family in the Little Gidding ideology: the originators Mary Woodnoth and her deceased husband Nicholas Ferrar.

settle permanently at Little Gidding. Anna wrote to Nicholas to admit that she had spent some money which had been entrusted to her; the episode was described in chapter 2. She expressed her “submission” and “acknowledgement” for having used the money “without consent or knowledge”— or so wrote Mary, in a subscript to her sister’s text.⁴² Anna directed her confession to Nicholas, but, apparently afraid to give it to him, instead passed the letter to Mary, who endorsed it, and added: “[s]he gave it me on Sat night of 10 June 1626.” Anna wrote of her tears and how her good designs were overruled by “untemperate affections”. She thanked Nicholas for the fatherly admonition she expected to receive, and attested to the great benefit wrought by his care for the soul and body of all those who belonged to her (biological) father’s house, trusting that he would “bee a meanes to leade us all unto eternall happynesse.”

The most significant instance for which evidence survives where Anna used Mary as an intermediary to communicate with Nicholas came later, in 1631, when she wrote to him to reaffirm her intention never to marry. Anna had written her original letter declaring her desire not to marry in July 1631, as discussed in chapter 3. On 22 September, she entrusted a letter repeating her resolution to Mary, which Mary kept (Anna’s letter is supplied in Appendix B). Then in October, Mary decided to write to Nicholas regarding the probable reason that Anna felt that she had to reiterate her position. Mary thought Anna’s determination to remain unwed was strengthened by the unwelcome prospect of marriage with her mother’s cousin, Arthur Woodnoth. She claimed that Anna, then 28 years old and having spent six years unmarried and at prayer alongside her sister at Little Gidding, had surprised her by revealing that she had been troubled after receiving a letter from Arthur on 1 October, which the sisters had read together. Thus Mary thought it best to pass the information on to Nicholas, adding a disclaimer to the effect that she did not know what the consequences of doing so would be. Reading Arthur’s letter had reminded Anna of “former perplexetys” bred four years previously (in 1627) when

she had Intimation, that her frinds would have benn content to bestowe her on Cosen Arther[.] hee deserved Shee sayed as good as Shee in all respectes, yett shee could not otherwise Conceive how in that Cours of Life, but that there was an Impossibillty for her to performe her duty as Shee ought & God required, & then Shee could neither expect comfort heere, nor hope for futuer happines – the freedom from this feare yf it might bee shee sayd truly would more Joy her then the assuranc of a hundred pounds a yeares Inheritance[.] This Shee sayed was her own mind – But if it weare Gods will & her Parents & friends desyres to whome Shee is bound to obey in this & all other things Shee resolved and by God[’s] grace would endeavour to submitt her owne will to give Satisfaction to theres –

⁴² Anna Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 10 Jun 1626, FP, r3, 594[694-5].

with this confidence that it would prove in the End every way best for her – & this was her Conclusion.⁴³

Mary, in Anna's stead, expressed Anna's conviction that she would be unable to serve God to the best of her capacity if she was married, in a bid to convince Nicholas to preserve her in her current state. It was an effective tactic in the context of the sisters' relationships with him, in which sincerity and piety were paramount and through which their celibacy was enabled and defended. Should Anna have believed honestly that it would detract from her religious duty, a personal appeal to Nicholas communicating her feelings would have been her best chance of avoiding marriage. Mary added emotive reference to Anna's fear, and the discomfort and hopelessness that would accompany what she regarded to be an inferior framework for divine witness, in a fashion consistent with the affective character of Anna's autograph letters.

Having received Anna's letter, Nicholas must have written to assure her that no such plan would be countenanced. Her thanks indicate the degree of her disinclination towards the match; she wrote that his letter brought not only "the delivery from [her] Feares but with it a hundredfold of Joy & comfort more then [she] could wish or desyer".⁴⁴ She was careful to list her gratitude not only to Nicholas and to God but also offered her "Dearest Worthy Sister Mary" her "Intyer love and thanks ... ever obleidged to her for the tru and loving affection" she had expressed. Clearly Anna regarded Mary's intervention as instrumental in saving her from the marriage.

Anna was sufficiently forthright as to communicate her position in writing, yet did not send her letter to Nicholas directly. It is not clear which force was the greatest, but a number of factors likely moved Anna in this matter, in particular fear – at the prospect of marriage, the loss of her special relationship with Nicholas, and the consequences of defying the will of her parents and family. Anna also knew that Mary would take the information committed to her to Nicholas, out of duty to him or as a conscious intercession on Anna's behalf; in either case Mary's greater leverage with Nicholas contained the possibility of a favourable outcome. And in doing so Anna conformed overall with a gendered stereotype by which, as a woman, it was inappropriate for her to present a countervailing opinion to a man directly. Anna's letter of thanks is dated 22 October 1631; this is curious, considering Mary gave Nicholas Anna's original letter that same day, according to his endorsement, yet he did not read it until 23 October, in Mary's

⁴³ Mary Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 18 Oct 1631, FP, r4, 816[493], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, p.271.

⁴⁴ Anna Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 22 Oct 1631, FP, r4, 817[494].

presence, which, if true, would therefore have been the earliest date he could have written to reassure Anna.

Nicholas did not make Anna marry Arthur; it does not follow that he had not explored the possibility of the union without her knowledge. A letter from Susanna Collet, Anna's mother, reveals that Nicholas had written to sound her out on the matter in August. Mrs Collet signalled her reservations about the bestowal of her daughter in marriage in her response. At the time she was at the Mapletoft residence at Margaretting, attending to her daughter Su during her first, difficult accouchement (Su delivered a daughter, Mary, around the beginning of August), yet she took care to protect Anna's interests too. She added a string of qualifications to the effect that she would not have offered her opinion had Nicholas not requested it, and that she trusted his judgement and that of her other "dearest friends", who seem not only to have been consulted on the match but also to have had the power to decide whether it would be contracted. Then she stated:

give me leave only to say thus much, that such is my Affection to my dear Anna, that it woud be most heavie for me, to see her bestowed on any man that did not willingly nay most desirously make choice of her; but doubting neither of yr love nor wisdom, I dare leave it to God and yourselves, to proceed in or to Suppress the motion as you shall think fittest and God I trust shall direct you⁴⁵

Perhaps Susanna Collet knew that her cousin Arthur was equally disinclined to have Anna for a spouse.

Notwithstanding the special quality of the relationships between Nicholas and Mary, and Nicholas and Anna, and the exclusivity of information implicit in some of their written exchanges, not all of their business was confidential. The other Collet sisters were seldom absent from their uncle's thoughts, and all were comprehended in his spiritual programme, irrespective of Mary and Anna's exceptional commitment. Nicholas concluded a letter to Anna with words addressed to all the sisters: "What I write to you my deare childe I equally intende to your dearest sisters my most beloved Cares and Crownes of my Joy – beseeching you all with perfect Love and Unity of Mynde to goe on cheerefully in these good paths which you are entered".⁴⁶

The sisters had recourse to family members other than Nicholas for spiritual advice too. The Revd Joshua Mapletoft's letter to Mary, his sister-in-law, of 15 November 1631, suggests that she had written seeking counsel.⁴⁷ To a significant extent exchanges like this one were part of (or extensions of) the general practice of letter-writing as a means of

⁴⁵ Susanna Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, Aug 1629, CL, fols 8^r-8^v.

⁴⁶ Nicholas Ferrar to Anna Collet, 1 Jun 1631, FP, r4, 788[406], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.258-9.

⁴⁷ Joshua Mapletoft to Mary Collet, 15 Nov 1631, FP, r4, 820[501].

maintaining cordial bonds between kin and friends, demonstrating deference to senior family members, and further cultivating specific interpersonal links by appealing to the expertise of the given correspondent – in this case Mapletoft’s vocation implied an especially candid dialogue.⁴⁸ In the context of the sisters’ relationships with Nicholas, it is possible that petitioning a different clerical relative was a strategy Mary used to negotiate the balance of power between Anna, Nicholas and herself, particularly if they were competing for their uncle’s attention. Alternatively, she may have sought Joshua’s advice owing to his specific aptitude on some matter, or perhaps keeping up advisory relations with other authority figures seemed decorous or prudent, counteracting such shades of impropriety as might have been associated with their intense bond with Nicholas. Regardless, in this instance Joshua, who seems to have failed in some promise to her, was insistent that his advice was superfluous and that the already pious Mary would not need it to make progress in holy ways, almost dismissive in his bidding: “so go on and prosper, the Lord is with you”.

Conclusion

The nature of the relationships between Mary and Anna Collet and Nicholas Ferrar was unusual in their early Stuart context. The affective bonds these single adult relatives shared, at the core of which were their faith and their celibacy, were amongst the unique features of the Ferrars’ variation on the ideal patriarchal household at Little Gidding. They practised parenting without being parents by marriage or biology, and found different sites for the blend of authority and affection that existed, ideally and in certain real relationships, between married couples. With the exception of a few notable studies, including Alan Bray’s work on male friendship, and Frances Harris’s examination of the spiritual relationship of John Evelyn and Margaret (Blagge) Godolphin, historical attention has generally focused on gendered relationships that conform to standard configurations within conventional patriarchal families.⁴⁹ In contrast, this study of the process of Nicholas, Mary and Anna’s interaction conveys something of the experience of single individuals and the strategies they devised to come nearer to the conventional ideals upheld within the family unit to which they belonged regarding the organisation of gender, marriage and sexuality.

⁴⁸ Some similar letters written to Mapletoft by other Collet sisters also survive, for example Hester Collet to Joshua Mapletoft, 5 Dec 1631, FP, r4, 828[516], in which Hester expresses gratitude for his “desyere of Instructing and Bennifiting” her.

⁴⁹ Alan Bray, *The Friend*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003; Frances Harris, *Transformations of Love: The Friendship of John Evelyn and Margaret Godolphin*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

However, their interpersonal efforts to conform were largely effective: the gendered power relations of the sisters' correspondence with Nicholas mirror their primary affiliation with and subjection to him as the male head of their household, an arrangement which removed the threat of disorder that they might otherwise have embodied as singlewomen.⁵⁰ Anna and Mary's unmarried position was legitimated by his approbation. In addition, as demonstrated earlier in the thesis, the sisters' celibacy was not incompatible with their serving the financial and practical exigencies of family and household, despite the fact that, as young women, they had not entered the patriarchal sexual economy in the usual way. Their relationships were managed such that patriarchy was not, ultimately, disturbed. Though the Little Gidding celibates Mary and Anna Collet and Nicholas Ferrar left the legacy of their piety, it was other members of the family who perpetuated the line of descent, assisted by the spiritual, material and practical resources they gained through their relatives' forfeiture of matrimony.

⁵⁰ Though of course, their father John Collet and their elder Ferrar uncle, John, both lived at Little Gidding, and could have been head, albeit probably without the idiosyncrasies of Nicholas's approach, if he had not lived there.

7 Unmarried men: Nicholas Ferrar and Arthur Woodnoth

Nicholas Ferrar and Arthur Woodnoth were first cousins. Arthur's father John and Nicholas's mother Mary were brother and sister, born into the Cheshire gentry family Woodnoth. Arthur's mother was one Jane Touchet. Roughly the same age (Arthur was probably born about 1590, and Nicholas in February 1593), Arthur and Nicholas shared a multidimensional relationship: they were not only close relatives but also close personal friends. Their interaction is documented in a copious correspondence which reveals that scarcely a week passed without at least one letter being dispatched in each direction. As D.R. Ransome has observed, letters between Nicholas and Arthur, and later those between Nicholas and Joshua Mapletoft, account for the greater part of the surviving papers of the Ferrar family from 1625 when the family moved to Little Gidding to the end of 1637, when Nicholas died.¹ The cousins' correspondence was characterised by constant and profound exchanges regarding personal matters such as the suitability of their vocations, the practice of ethical finance and the general health of their souls.

The exposition of the private, inter-subjective relations of seventeenth-century Englishmen is of historical interest equal to if not greater than the details of the everyday practical function that the letters, and thus their relationship, served: it was directed towards the sustenance of the residents of Little Gidding and the supervision of the young men of the family who were engaged in apprenticeship or starting out as professionals in London. Studying the relationship between Nicholas Ferrar and Arthur Woodnoth promises to contribute to understandings of masculinities in early modern England, and in particular to the relatively under-investigated topics of male sociability in the pre-revolutionary era, the experience of unmarried adult males, and the emotional relations of adult men.

From the evidence of their correspondence, this chapter demonstrates that Nicholas Ferrar and Arthur Woodnoth were responsible both for maintaining the Ferrar family at Little Gidding and for securing their future by supervising the professional training and moral conduct of the forthcoming generation. They were indispensable to the family, and participated effectively in the masculine networks of commerce and connected obligation, despite not being married and thus not fulfilling what Elizabeth Foyster and other historians have determined as being a crucial criterion for attaining the honourable

¹ D. R. Ransome, *Ferrar Papers*, "Introduction/Finding List", p.ii.

state of masculine adulthood – manhood – in early modern England.² Further, the practices of requesting and dispensing advice, which formed a very substantial part of Nicholas and Arthur’s correspondence that was more than simply rhetorical, are shown to have been activities upon which notions not only of moral responsibility, but also of gender, specifically masculinity, impinged. Beginning with an explanation of the basic character of Arthur and Nicholas’s friendship and an introduction to the practice of advice-giving, the ensuing discussion is divided into three parts, the first addressing the significance of advice-giving in Arthur and Nicholas’s relationship, the second investigating their roles as overseers and counsellors of younger male relatives, and the third commenting on the difficulty of negotiating support for adult males who were morally or materially debased.

The foundations of friendship and the significance of advice-giving

It is likely that Nicholas and Arthur’s years of cooperation and common purpose as venturers in the Virginia enterprise laid the groundwork for the pragmatic arrangement they arrived at to support the Ferrars after they settled in Huntingdonshire. Both men were active members of the Virginia Company and had extensive experience in London commerce, Nicholas drawing upon years of service in his father’s company following his return from the Continent, and Arthur continuing his business as a goldsmith or banker, having established himself in the trade in Foster Lane in the 1610s. Arthur’s father John had at least 18 children by his two wives, Elizabeth Walthall and Jane Touchet. Arthur was one of the youngest, and there were 12 sons, in view of which it makes sense that he went to London for his apprenticeship. Being “an ancient Adventurer and diligent prosecutor of the best ends for the advancement of the *Virginia* Plantation”, Arthur maintained an interest in the colony, or at least in asserting the propriety of his comrades’ actions in Company business, judging from the content of his tract vindicating the Sandys faction’s position in the turbulent closing phases of the Company’s existence. The work was published posthumously in 1651, nearly thirty years after the Company’s extinction, entitled *A short collection of the most remarkable passages from the originall to the dissolution of the Virginia Company*.³

² Foyster, *Manhood*, p.46.

³ London: Richard Cates for Edward Husband, 1651. The quote is from the epistle dedicatory, by “A.P.”, sig. A2.

Arthur spent a month as deputy governor of the Bermuda (Somers Islands) Company in October 1644, probably at the behest of Sir John Danvers who was then its Governor, the organisation's strong parliamentary culture at the time perhaps accounting for the brevity of his tenure.⁴ Though Danvers remained associated with certain royalists and was a friend to Woodnoth and the Ferrars, a "family of which he professed a great good opinion",⁵ he was a signatory of Charles I's death warrant, whereas it seems Woodnoth remained faithful to the crown. Both John and Nicholas Ferrar had inhabited the equivalent office in the Virginia Company in succession in the early 1620s, participants in the Sandys faction's ascendancy.

Danvers was one of many acquaintances that the Ferrars made through their work for the Virginia Company and, like his stepson George Herbert, he is particularly noteworthy amongst Nicholas and Arthur's mutual friends. Given the cousins' allegiances and experiences in common, both in enterprise and through family with its associated regional and social connections, their friends in common must have been quite numerous. Both exchanged regular correspondence and visits with families such as the Sandyses, and Arthur's apparently unfaltering hospitality in Foster Lane – letters frequently mention who is staying or about to arrive or depart – created a London base where it must be imagined regular meetings, serendipitous and otherwise, took place, facilitating the sort of discourse and transmission of news that reaffirmed and sustained friendly links. Nicholas and Arthur were thus well equipped, well connected (not forgetting their individual contacts such as those Nicholas had collected during his time at Cambridge and as an MP), and Arthur in particular well placed to provision the Ferrar household and negotiate furthering the interests of its members and associated kin.

Arthur was the Ferrars' agent in London. From his home and commercial premises at "the bunch of grapes" he procured a great majority of the material necessities requested by his isolated relatives and tirelessly managed the Ferrars' administrative affairs, enabling the successful prosecution of their business. His assistance ranged from supervising mercantile and legal transactions to arranging family members' transportation for visits. His unceasing expense of effort for the Ferrars was indispensable to their continued residence at Little Gidding. In September 1626 he sent oranges and lemons to help in the treatment of the ailing Hester Collet and arranged for a doctor to visit her at Little Gidding.⁶ In January 1630 he sent "seeds and the plat for the Comunion".⁷ In October 1628 he received

⁴ Michael J. Jarvis, "Wodenoth, Arthur (c.1590–1644x51)," in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29817> (accessed October 2, 2006).

⁵ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, c.27 Jan 1630, FP, r4, 703[170].

⁶ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 21 Sep 1626, FP, r3, 599[665].

⁷ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, c.27 Jan 1630, FP, r4, 703[170].

instructions from Nicholas as to the purchase of cloth for shirts and other clothing for the Gidding residents, together with directions as to the style of the garments.⁸

Arthur was involved in the affairs of other people besides the Ferrars too. Lady Danvers, advocating for a Mrs Fowler who had been deserted by her husband, explained her plan for helping the woman to Arthur in a letter of January 1630. D.R. Ransome attributes the letter to a Lady Mary Danvers of Lavington, Wiltshire; however none of Sir John Danvers' three wives was named Mary. At this date he was married to his second wife, Elizabeth, née Dauntsey, who is therefore the most likely author. It was through their marriage in 1628 that Danvers came into possession of the estate at Lavington. With regard to Mrs Fowler, Lady Danvers stated that she would provide for her on the condition that she abandoned her child to her errant husband and quit them both.⁹ Arthur's particular role in the business is not clear.

Of all the offices he performed on the Ferrars' behalf that are represented in the family archive, Arthur's role as overseer of several of the Collet sons' apprenticeships in the city stands out as having been the most consistently demanding. Apart from monitoring the performance of the young men who were contractually engaged to other masters, Arthur took on at least one of the boys, Nicholas Collet (b.c.1606) as apprentice in his own establishment. Nicholas and Arthur's relationships with the apprentices in their family are discussed later in the chapter.

The seeking and giving of advice is a prominent characteristic of the Ferrar-Woodnoth friendship as represented in their correspondence, and in their dealings with the younger Collet men. Just as it appears to be central to Arthur and Nicholas's relationship, so it may be presumed that the matter of advising one another must have been a matter of great consequence in the relationships of other men. Just what is happening, then, when men offer advice to or seek counsel from one another?

If one accepts the notion of masculinity as being constituted and reaffirmed continually in the performance of acts culturally construed as manly, according to rank (such as the variance between gentlemanly behaviour and conduct deemed appropriate for less affluent men of labouring occupations) and also to more specific social, familial or professional contexts (fatherly behaviour, or conduct according to the customs of the legal fraternity for example), then the process of counsel was one in which the protocols of the participants' particular masculinities were created and reflected. A man's position as patriarchal agent entitled him to issue directives and dispense advice but also obliged him to model good conduct, according to a conception of manhood characterised by rationality

⁸ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, Oct 1628, FP, r4, 649[67-70].

⁹ Lady Danvers to Arthur Woodnoth, 29 Jan 1630, FP, r4, 705[182].

and the capacity to govern one's baser passions, such as anger, lust, and vengefulness. So the practices of seeking and giving advice were moral acts that intrinsically advocated deference to authority and perpetuated patterns of paternalistic concern on the part of the advisor, and conscientiousness on the part of the advisee. As such they were one means of fulfilling the requirements of respectable masculinity as conceived of in the social world of Arthur and Nicholas; one process through which masculinity was enacted (irrespective of the outcomes, the quality of the advisor's recommendations, the earnestness of the advisee in hearkening to them, or the efficacy of the counsel once applied). Relationships were bolstered in the process, foremost at an intimate, interpersonal level, but never free of wider social and practical implications.

Advice-seeking is consistent with the contemporary cultural expectations of attending to the examples of virtuous persons and demonstrating deference to those possessed of authority. Conventional approval of the study of history as a register of human activities in which models of good behaviour and sound judgement could be found (together with instructive illustrations of their opposites) was operative in the discourses informing the gendered moral education of men of Arthur and Nicholas's social station in early modern England.¹⁰ Keith Thomas has explored the particular importance of advice-giving – casuistry – in the seventeenth-century within a moral-religious culture that emphasised the role of individual conscience in decision-making. Clergymen were regarded as the most suitable advice-givers, though the authority was not exclusive: judicious and wise laypeople, often those of advanced age, and even women might provide good counsel.¹¹ Patriarchy and a wisdom tradition were fundamental to this culture, spanning sacred and secular territory, and regard for historical examples issued from these paradigms. Associated notions include ideas of pedagogy and scholarship based on accumulated knowledge and the superiority of the teacher, grounded in scholastic tradition and inflected by the classical models that had been reinvigorated via humanist enthusiasm. In this connection, it is important to remember that expressions of counsel should be read with a view to the fact that advice was the main business of the deliberative category of rhetoric, a weapon in the writer or orator's arsenal of strategies to cajole and convince.¹²

Concepts of occupational authority are also pertinent, which became increasingly entrenched during the early modern period as discrete professional discourses evolved.

¹⁰ The Little Academy, discussed in chapter 4, provided a distinctive variation of this sort of education, designed for young women.

¹¹ Keith Thomas, "Cases of Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England" in John Morrill, Paul Slack and Daniel Woolf (eds), *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England: Essays Presented to G.E. Aylmer*, pp.36, 40-41.

¹² Deliberative rhetoric, the language of politicians and private advice, as outlined by Cicero in the *De Oratore*. See Thomas M. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p.34ff.

Related but distinct advice-giving practices existed in professional contexts, most notably in the field of medicine, in which consultations were frequently transacted by letter.¹³ Authoritative advice was the core conceit of the burgeoning genre of advisory and conduct literature, by which expert knowledge on matters as diverse as hygiene and animal husbandry was disseminated. Parents were informed that their duty was to provide advice to their children, appropriate to the age, gender and situation of life of the latter.¹⁴ Amongst this paternalistic literature were volumes directed specifically at apprentices, didactic works with a moralistic spirit similar to that demonstrated by Arthur and Nicholas in their letters to the Collet brothers.¹⁵

Good (masculine) conduct was defined with reference to a combination of relevant factors including those just described, appealing in turn to classical values such as dignified stoicism or to local standards regarding gentlemanly hospitality, for example. But above all it was Christianity that early seventeenth-century Englishmen construed as carrying the most cultural force in their society, and at least in theory, Christian principles thus exerted most influence upon them; this was expressly so in the case of Nicholas and Arthur. For them, mutual concern and humble deference to one another's advice were elements of Christian conduct. Further, counselling and instructing believers were amongst the basic pastoral responsibilities of ministers, facilitated by and reinforcing the authoritative position of the clergy in Christian patriarchy. Although the moral duty of advice-giving was enjoined of fathers and masters, as reflected in the discourse of the abundant conduct literature of the time, the clergyman possessed sacral, supernatural authority, commingled with more conventional power in respect of the seniority of the presbyter. Being unmarried, Arthur and Nicholas could not invoke the traditional authority of the paterfamilias, but by custom, Nicholas's holy orders meant that he could claim greater spiritual authority than his friend, which arguably justified his typically superior posture in their correspondence, as advisor to Arthur's advisee.

¹³ Susan M. Fitzmaurice, *The Familiar Letter in Early Modern English: A pragmatic approach*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2002, chapter 4, "Sociable letters, acts of advice and medical counsel", pp.87-127. Harold J. Cook, "Good Advice and Little Medicine: The Professional Authority of Early Modern English Physicians", *Journal of British Studies* 33:1 (Jan 1994), pp.1-31. The efficacy of consultation by letter was open to questioning: in April 1637 Arthur wrote to the ailing Nicholas that the physician Mr Moore "conceived it impossible for any man in England to Cure you by letter therefore wished you to come to London which he sayd was of absolute nessesity." Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar 27 Apr 1637, FP, r5, 1052[773-4], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.295-6.

¹⁴ Lady Katherine Sandys wrote to John Ferrar with much news of her children, and in the process mentioned a young Mr Anderson, who had taken an older man to lodge in his household. Anderson, his "father being lately dead and hee yong and lately married is most desirous to have such an adviser." Lady Katherine Sandys to Mr [John] Ferrar, 4 Apr 1633(?), FP, r5, 893[393-4].

¹⁵ For other literature aimed at apprentices, who were generally literate and keen consumers of entertainment, including ballads, plays, pamphlets, see Mark Thornton Burnett, "Apprentice Literature and the 'Crisis' of the 1590s", *Yearbook of English Studies* 21 (1991), pp.27-38.

Nicholas's authority as a counsellor was strengthened in the sight of Arthur and of other friends and family members by his particular godliness. On one occasion in 1631, Arthur requested Nicholas's advice concerning the welfare of his brother, John Woodnoth, who was at the time sick and injured, and desperately seeking secure employment in order to provide for his family, as well as trying to arrange vocational training for his children. Arthur attributed to Nicholas sagacity derived, indeed almost devolved, from God, referring to "the espetiall direction of Gods spiritt from where all good and holy Counsell Do proceede".¹⁶ By coupling his supplication with references to God's mercy, Arthur effectively engaged Nicholas's concern by invoking the bond of Christian obligation, calling upon him both in terms of his superior authority as an anointed deacon in the hierarchy of the Church, but also in terms of the benevolent, pastoral aspect of his office.

Nicholas was forthright in claiming the divine source of his recommendations too, and perhaps never more so than in deliberations surrounding the stricken apprenticeship of his nephew Ned (Edward) Collet. On 25 April 1631 he wrote to Arthur:

Now truly I suppose that the Counsell that I gave you this morning was by Gods mercy and Light entering my Mynd rightly deduced and delivered from the Principles of that Wisdome which God hath sent us heere to bee the Light and direction of our proceedings in Civill Affayres. And therfore I have the more Confidently given it and now the more boldly confirme it. If it bee not right god graunte that you may see the error therof and fynde better.¹⁷

Nicholas's striking self-assurance may in fact be pretence, yet it seems real enough. In either case, it was certainly a persuasive strategy.

Nicholas did not confine his advice-giving to matters of religion. Pursuing prayer in retirement and divorced from the everyday conduct of trade though he was, he did not refrain from giving Arthur business advice. "For the discomposure which a sudden cessation of buissness breeds in your mynde I doe not much wonder nor would I have you to make any greate reflection thereon", he wrote in April 1630; "however bee sure not to grow to any variation of those resolutions which you have in better freedom & strength of mynde resolved on."¹⁸ In spite of the notes of incongruity or presumption modern readers may be inclined to detect at first, Nicholas could well have offered valuable perspectives on these matters. He carried the experience he had gained managing his father's affairs, from his activities in the Virginia Company and as MP, and he had demonstrated his skill in

¹⁶ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 25 May 1631, FP, r4, 785[397]. Nicholas ascribed his insight to God also: "when I shall have better considered of it shall father acquaynte you with that which god hath put into my mynde". Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 14 Apr 1631, FP, r5, 772[356].

¹⁷ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 25 April 1631, FP, r4, 779[381-3].

¹⁸ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 19 April 1630, FP, r4, 719[219].

associated administrative and financial matters whilst salvaging the wreckage of his brother John's and the family's business interests following the Virginia Company's dissolution. If Nicholas's input seems overly worldly or immodest, it should be weighed against the fact that fostering the material security of each other's family members and dependents would have been accepted by his peers as falling amongst the duties of responsible Christian friends and kinsmen.¹⁹

Nicholas's reputation for wisdom is reflected further in the fact that persons beyond the family also sought his advice. A letter of 25 February 1630 from Lady Katherine Sandys (née Bulkeley), fourth wife to Sir Edwin and the mother of all of his surviving children except for his first daughter Elizabeth, indicates that both she and her husband were in the habit of appealing to Nicholas.²⁰ It is notable, too, that Lady Katherine's letter was the product of her husband's instruction to ask for the advice of another man.

During the early 1630s, extensive, serious written exchanges between Arthur and Nicholas were concentrated on two issues in particular; examining them provides insights into the important personal and familial dimensions of their relationship. First, Arthur questioned his vocation as a goldsmith, and considered quitting his business to take holy orders. The correspondence surrounding this episode, discussed below, reveals the nature of the close personal relationship that he and Nicholas shared in some detail. Second, Ned Collet breached the terms of his apprenticeship, which, together with his associated reprobation, prompted a flood of letters between Arthur and Nicholas. The cousins' exchanges, the subject of the final section of the chapter, supply an impression of exactly what it was that they deemed problematic in the situation, and how the family networks were mobilised in response to the crisis.

Advising Arthur

By a letter of about 1 March 1630, Arthur Woodnoth consulted his friend and cousin Nicholas on a grave matter. He sought Nicholas's advice, under God, regarding the best way to provide for himself and his servants if he abandoned the world of trade.²¹ Though there is no suggestion of it in earlier letters, at this time Arthur was taking stock of his life.

¹⁹ Indeed, his concern for matters of business and finance may reflect the continued doubt that many seventeenth-century people experienced with regard to the moral propriety of capitalistic practices. See Thomas, "Cases of Conscience", pp.47-8.

²⁰ Lady Katherine Sandys to Nicholas Ferrar, 25 Feb 1630, FP, r4, 709[189].

²¹ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, c.1 Mar 1630, FP, r4, 712[195-6].

He had fastened upon the notion that he would do better spiritually, if not materially, if he gave up work as a goldsmith to become a clergyman.

Should Arthur have sold his business, there would have been profound repercussions for the network of persons which he supported, directly and indirectly, through his position in mercantile London. His relatives at Little Gidding depended utterly upon Arthur and his successful continuance in trade for their survival, as well as for the future viability of the family via his assistance in apprenticing their sons. Whilst Arthur had neither wife nor children to care for, from the beginning of his deliberations he demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility towards his servants. The letters show that he took the welfare of these householders together with the interests of his apprentices into consideration from the outset.

Arthur's attitude to his servants and apprentices is consistent with the pattern of proprietorial concern with regard to employees that is discernible throughout the Ferrar papers of the early seventeenth century.²² It was a duty of care that could be exploited. In one instance during negotiations regarding Nick (Nicholas) Collet's apprenticeship, Nicholas Ferrar wished Arthur to privilege the opinions of family at Little Gidding. Nicholas played upon the standard rhetoric by which friends and family assumed the status of servants by virtue of mutual obligation, as well as Nick's position as servant to his master in the trade, to remind Arthur of his commitment to Little Gidding interests. Nicholas assured Arthur that the course of action which best promoted his own cause would be the one that most benefited his servants.²³ As obligated as Arthur was to his household servants, there is little question here that by "servants" Nicholas was referring to Nick and the Ferrars.

Nicholas responded to Arthur's speculation about the priesthood with advice to the effect that Arthur should on no account sell his business.²⁴ Selfish motives, insofar as the interests of kin and friends can be construed as such, must have been implicated in Nicholas's unwavering negative disposition towards Arthur's stated intention, which is not surprising and indeed arguably was sensible given the circumstances. Not only did Nicholas dissuade Arthur from giving up the business, he criticised Arthur for being attracted to a profession for which he was unsuited – and patently so, was the implication.

The tone Nicholas adopted in addressing Arthur is at times redolent of masculine comradeship, reading like a straightforward appeal to Arthur's rationality, urging him to

²² Considerable care was taken over the fortunes of the destitute John Trevet, for example, who approached Theophilus Woodnoth (a cousin and clergyman at Linkinhall, Cornwall) seeking employment in service. Theophilus Woodnoth to John Ferrar, 12 Nov 1621, FP, r2, 332[341].

²³ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 3 May 1630, FP, r4, 719[221].

²⁴ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 9 Mar 1630, FP, r4, 714[201-7].

disembarrass himself of this ill-fitting conception, and the sooner the better. At other times he is outright condescending. Jealousy might well have been a factor here; Nicholas was a clergyman and may have wished to maintain exclusive tenure of that honourable office in his immediate circle. Beyond the idea that Nicholas may have feared losing his special religious authority, the prospect of having more than one senior male in the family devoted to the spiritual life might have aroused the fear of adverse practical consequences, especially if it meant Arthur's substantial disengagement from worldly affairs, parallel to Nicholas's retirement at Little Gidding. Who, then, would be sufficiently mobile to move between engagements in the secular sphere, acting in contexts typically dominated by men? Did Arthur hope to find a living in a city parish, or in the countryside? And perhaps Nicholas simply believed that Arthur was not cut out to be a cleric. Without declining into further speculation, some such may have been the concerns that motivated Nicholas to quash his cousin's hieratical aspirations.

Apart from his cousin's opinions, Arthur would have had to face official examination by a bishop, the process by which the Church regulated admission to the clergy. Rosemary O'Day has shown that the ecclesiastical authorities became increasingly selective in their choice of ministers, particularly from the 1620s as an increasing number of university graduates vied for entry to the priesthood. Arthur's age and apparent lack of a degree would likely have disadvantaged him in a pool of graduate ordinands aged in their early to mid twenties.²⁵

Speaking on behalf of the entire company at Little Gidding was one the strategies Nicholas used to assert himself in correspondence with Arthur. Apart from reflecting the fact that letters were commonly shared in families, passed around or read aloud, drawing attention to the implication of the whole household in his and Arthur's transactions was effective in a number of respects. It brought the interests of the many people for whom Arthur was in one way or another responsible to the foreground. It demonstrated force of numbers. It stressed the Ferrars' unanimity of opinion, which scanned with their ideal of unity regardless of whether or not it was actually true or representative of a majority position. And it diverted attention from what might have been primarily Nicholas's will.

Standards of correspondence between friends in the early modern period were informed by contemporary principles of intimate friendship, and of these Nicholas stipulated candour above all in his relations with Arthur. The demand itself, as much as the information it sought to elicit, would enhance his position of control.

²⁵ O'Day, *English Clergy*, pp.51-6.

Wee... shall desyrously expect the information by your owne letters of your resolutions as farr as you shall thinke fitt to acquaynte us with – For there may perhaps bee many passadges that concerning others require secrecy. But of that which belongs to your selfe bee not niggardly in Imparting being assured that wee shall as with true affections soe with faithfull indeavor to the uttermost as much as in us lieth second your designes.²⁶

Openness had limits; confidence was its necessary complement. Valuing the trustworthiness of friends and allies meant respecting their maintenance of others' privacy. But Nicholas insisted that Arthur's transparency confirmed the mutual love between him and the Ferrars.

And otherwise you doe your selfe interrupt that Webb of freindshyp which I hope might otherwise prove a patterne In an adge that needs patternes. If your hearte bee like ours you cannot but understande my meaning.²⁷

Nicholas implied that non-compliance on this point would be interpreted as a sign of Arthur's difference, not only of mind but at the very core an otherness from the rest of the family, and as such Nicholas's statement carries a threatening exclusionary note. By late July 1630 Nicholas fell to instructing Arthur to write him letters disclosing all of his troubles, no doubt hoping to elicit further information that would help to keep him abreast of Arthur's decision-making process.²⁸

As in the dialogues of the Little Academy, Nicholas regularly called upon the examples of great and virtuous persons to reinforce the wisdom of items of advice. The reference did not have to be specific; Nicholas recommended slow decision-making as "the motto of famous men", for example.²⁹ It was a refrain throughout his attempts to influence Arthur's deliberations regarding continuation in his trade.³⁰ Indeed, Nicholas's desire to find "a patterne In an adge that needs patternes" never diminished. He was anxious to legitimate his choice of an unconventional path in life, to which he had diverted his family also, and to fix on a watertight paradigm to guide them on their way. Apparently he hoped to find sanction in historical parallels. But exceptionalism had its toll. As discussed previously, Nicholas's final illness followed on years of increasing physical privation and ever more frenzied prayer and study at the expense of sleep, suggesting that he never found the assurance that might have permitted repose.

²⁶ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 10 May 1630, FP, r4, 722[227], partly reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.255-56.

²⁷ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 10 May 1630, FP, r4, 722[227], partly reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.255-56.

²⁸ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 26 July 1630, FP, r4, 731[249-50].

²⁹ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 3 May 1630, FP, r4, 719[221].

³⁰ For example, Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 2 Aug 1630, FP, r4, 732[251-4].

Characteristically, Nicholas invoked his own chief demon, guilt, and pointed out to Arthur its source in the transgressions and errors of his past, in a bid to render his recommendation against similar action the more credible.³¹ Nicholas claimed to possess a sense of guilt “more heavy then a whole myne of Leade” from just “this one parte of Misgovernaunce”: probably the spleen with which he prosecuted the effort to impeach Cranfield. Doubtless Nicholas’s experience of regret was quite real. Nevertheless, presenting himself as a humble and flawed fellow-traveller was surely a tactic designed to encourage Arthur’s collusion of mind.

On 18 August 1630 Arthur informed Nicholas that he intended to stay at the helm of his business.³² Notwithstanding Nicholas’s constant exhortations to slow contemplation and being a decision nearly six months in the making, Arthur’s resolve proved temporary. No correspondence from September 1630 survives,³³ but the October letters show signs of marked discord between the friends, apparently because Arthur had ceased to acquaint Nicholas with his every reflection. Nicholas was at his most insistent, haranguing Arthur for not having written and for the consequent doubt cast on his affection.³⁴ “I shall perceive that your kynde acceptance of my faithfull and Loving Counsell shall approve the sincerity of your owne Love for you cannot doubt of myne but through the weakenes of your owne.”³⁵ In his earlier letters, Nicholas expressed concern at not having heard from Arthur: “Not only your protracted stay beyond expectation but the uncertaynty of your welfare which Nicks letter intimates makes mee full of anxiety. And I cannot but doubt that something hath putt you out of your selfe”.³⁶ He appealed to Arthur’s duty as a friend to maintain contact. But soon Nicholas could barely conceal his anger. “Both your Longsom stay in Wiltshire and soe confirmed silence make mee now indeed to merveil ... I cannot but be suspicious of the worst” he wrote, describing the susceptibility of weak minds to “the exceeding subtilty and importunate Mallice of the Devill”.³⁷ Finally on 5 November 1630, and only two days after Richard Ferrar had written to his brother Nicholas with news of his arrest and requesting “a handsome small bible”,³⁸ Arthur wrote

³¹ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 4-9 Aug 1630, FP, r4, 734[258-60].

³² Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 18 Aug 1630, FP, r4, 738[269].

³³ Nicholas had been in bed ill in mid August and his indisposition may have lingered (Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 16 Aug 1630, FP, r4, 737[265-7]), whilst later that month there was an exchange regarding a nephew of Arthur’s, William Woodnoth (Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, draft, 23 Aug 1630, FP, r4, 741[275-9]) and by the start of September Nicholas and his mother were fielding Richard Ferrar’s request for debt relief and bail (Richard Ferrar to Mary Ferrar, c.1 Sep 1630, FP, r4, 743[285-7], first part reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, p.278).

³⁴ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, draft, 11 Oct 1630, FP, r4, 745[291] & 746[292].

³⁵ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 4 Oct 1630, FP, r4, 744[289].

³⁶ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 19 Oct 1630, FP, r4, 748[297].

³⁷ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 27 Oct 1630, FP, r4, 751[305].

³⁸ Richard Ferrar to Nicholas Ferrar, 3 Nov 1630, FP, r4, 752[307-8].

to explain his silence.³⁹ He had been ill, but he was also prevaricating, attributing the slowness in his decision to the fact that Sir John Danvers figured in the matter. Whatever Nicholas thought of it, this letter is the first surviving indication of Danvers's implication in Arthur's decision.

The exigencies of maintaining the family carried on as usual. Tension continued as Nicholas arranged with Arthur to have money sent to Richard on 8 November.⁴⁰ The next day Nicholas wrote with advice concerning Nick Collet, whose "selfe will and obstinacy", tending towards greed, was troublesome. But 24-year-old Nick was Arthur's apprentice, and Arthur had not asked for guidance. Nicholas claimed he wrote out of love, as if he could not help but send counsel. When friendly cooperation broke down, the overlap of the two men's spheres of influence, each territory constituted by formal and familial measures of authority, became problematic. Perhaps it was inevitable that the intersecting provinces of each man's responsibility in circumstances like this should cause friction between friends.

Joshua Mapletoft, the clergyman husband of Nicholas Ferrar's niece Su (née Collet) and thus Nick Collet's brother-in-law, joined with Arthur to intervene with Nick regarding his conduct. On 24 November 1630 Joshua reported to Nicholas that he and Arthur had dined with Nick, where discourse had touched on the need for "Industrious diligence & frugality to both of which he seemes to be well inclined."⁴¹ That day Joshua wrote to Arthur too, to offer support by way of prayers for Arthur's "indisposition" of mind.⁴²

What was Arthur's state of mind, and who best understood it? The two men in holy orders might have been collaborating in their bid to stop Arthur's encroachment onto their professional turf, or preserving him in his goldsmith's business to safeguard the material welfare of the family. Perhaps they thought him unsuited to the church, unsound of mind, or just wanted to steady his progress given he proposed so abrupt a change in direction. Or perhaps Joshua wanted to know the cause of the strain between Arthur and Nicholas. In any case, Nicholas kept insisting he was praying for Arthur in letters otherwise aloof in tone – "I had thought to have written some other things but it is late and I am weary" – and in which requests were restricted to "buissiness of Importance" (for example, obtaining flax and hemp for "poore folkes who miserably cry out" to work).⁴³ Nicholas's apologies for the disruption his appeals might cause were over-conspicuous, verging on insincerity.

³⁹ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 5 Nov 1630, FP, r4, 753[311].

⁴⁰ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 8 Nov 1630, FP, r4, 754[313-5].

⁴¹ Joshua Mapletoft to Nicholas Ferrar, 24 Nov 1630, FP, r4, 756[321].

⁴² Joshua Mapletoft to Arthur Woodnoth, 24 Nov 1630, FP, r4, 758[325].

⁴³ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 24 Nov 1630, FP, r4, 759[327-8].

By mid December 1630 Arthur had set about disposing of his assets by endowing relatives. Nicholas's counsel of caution at this juncture is representative of his general style of advice-giving throughout the matter, when not especially inflamed. It also reveals Nicholas's perpetual state of worry about his own "wordly (*sic*) course".

[Take care that] in settling your friends you loose not your owne estate and with to much freeness and fidelity overgoe true wariness and wisdom. My deare Cosen believe mee Hee that is not wise and faithfull for himselfe cannot bee truly wyse and faithfull for another in the selfe same kynde. And the fynding out of what is truly fitt and agreeable in wordly (*sic*) course of mens lives is a thing of deepe Judgement and of much difficulty. Doe not therfore bee to sudden or resolute in the advise of another mans kynde of Lyfe, which is very difficulte for a man to consulte rightly of in his owne as particular my faithfull promises I have soe often renewd make mee thus free in that which I thinke soe highly concerneth you. God bless and direct you.

The letter reflects Nicholas's obsessional conscientiousness poignantly. It shows how he could blend gentleness with the pragmatic advice that his sense of responsibility demanded. Nicholas's warning regarding "the advise of another mans kynde of Lyfe" is the clearest intimation in all the correspondence surrounding Arthur's future path that he sought to copy Nicholas; at the very least it suggests that Nicholas perceived that Arthur wished to copy him. The weight of determining the best way to live for these conformist Englishmen is most striking here, as is the immediacy of religious ideals in their motivation, overwhelming the presence of any petty proprietorial claim to godly priorities on Nicholas's part. In this connection, Heal and Holmes's statement, commenting on the outstanding religious commitment of several minorities, that "a cultural standard was established" during the century or so between the Reformation and the Civil War "that challenged the rest of the gentry to explicit response" is germane.⁴⁴

A hiatus on the question of Arthur's vocation follows in the surviving correspondence. In February 1632, Arthur was struck by an illness sufficiently severe at times to prevent his writing.⁴⁵ During its progress, Arthur arrived at a kind of resolution. Lamenting his characteristic indecision, he told Nicholas that he would opt for "a quiett Life in laborious and humble courses."

That choyse I am the rather enduced to by the consideration of the workeing of Gods grace uppon my soule Heartofore somewhat have I read in Doctor

⁴⁴ Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, pp.373-4.

⁴⁵ John Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 9 Feb 1632, FP, r4, 839[542], written by Collet – almost illegibly – on Woodnoth's behalf.

[Thomas] Jacksons to Draw an observancy of such meanes and wayes as whereby the spirit of God hath formerly enclyned our desires to Good.⁴⁶

Low estate meant greater eligibility for grace and made for easier submission to the divine will, he reasoned. “But I dare not rely upon my owne conclusions wherefore I beseech you to express your directions touching the former conclusions of aplying myself to Sir J. D. [John Danvers].” Arthur seldom settled upon anything without reference to Nicholas, whether purely out of deference or, as seems to have been the case here, because he believed that Nicholas possessed special authority. Arthur attributed his recovery to God through Nicholas’s intercession: “for the same day about the same time that notice came of my sicknes to you Health began to com from my God to me.” The treatment of various doctors had not worked, he claimed, until Nicholas’s prayers were applied, “As if God had lockt upp the remedy under that word which nothing but faythfull & devoted prayers cold open.”

No document containing a discrete statement of his final decision exists, but Arthur spent his remaining 18 years a layman. One manuscript copy of John Ferrar’s *Life of Nicholas Ferrar* includes the following summary of the episode, however: “Mr Woodnoth ... was desirous to take upon him the ministry, but was dissuaded by Nicholas Ferrar and afterwards by Mr Herbert, yet would needs make a trial. But after some trial, finding himself well advised, returned to his trade.”⁴⁷ Arthur was left with little choice given the disapproval of two such holy men.

In counselling Arthur, Nicholas trained him in turn in the advisor’s art. It was a gendered process. As he directed Arthur to admonish others, particularly women, Nicholas encouraged Arthur to embrace his masculine authority as an advisor. It is likely that defining and demonstrating adequate masculinity was necessary to Arthur and Nicholas’s relationship so that it was founded on parity and mutual respect in that important regard. The friendship was characterised by a pattern of dominance in which Arthur generally deferred to the ‘superior’ Nicholas; yet Nicholas would have relied upon Arthur’s constant demonstration of sufficient strength for that dominance to have any continuing value, needing an equally fit sparring partner. In one instance Arthur thanked Nicholas for demonstrating “fatherly respect and care” toward him, but it is an anomaly.⁴⁸ It was in Nicholas’s interest that, in response to his own assertive modelling, Arthur should parade

⁴⁶ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 15 Mar 1632, FP, r4, 844[553-8]. The volume is possibly one of the Laudian Jackson’s 12 books of commentaries on the Apostles’ Creed. His collected works were later compiled and published by Barnabas Oley. See chapter 1, p.17.

⁴⁷ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.107; MS Mm.i.46 (“Baker”), vol. 35, Baker MSS, Cambridge University Library.

⁴⁸ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 8 Mar 1632, FP, r4, 842[548-9].

his manliness in acts of admonition, and doubly served his purpose if this meant his own prescriptions were seconded, as in the following instance.

Bathsheba, John Ferrar's wife, was conspicuous amongst the householders at Little Gidding for her insubordination. Nicholas held that the family should try to mould her inclinations and hoped that God would "open her eys and heart to see and acknowledge the riches of his mercy towards her and towards us all." Nicholas involved Arthur in the corporate project of disciplining Bathsheba. Apparently she presented an opportunity for Arthur to rehearse his technique, especially given the absence of a wife or children of his own. It is unlikely that Nicholas would have needed Arthur's assistance in the business, or would have risked giving the impression that neither he nor Bathsheba's husband could manage her.

And bee not now neither shy nor sparing to give her a sound & playne admonition of what you thinke and know necessary for her to heare and practize, Which though it will bee perhaps to you troublesom to give & to her bitter to receive yet it will bee profitable both to her by way of preparation for righter disposed thoughts and to you for the performance of a necessary duty. Warne them that are unruly Comforte the feeble myneded support the weake.⁴⁹

It was useful practice for Arthur, who had a large and demanding task in governing the family apprentices.

Advising Apprentices – Ned Collet

One of the most interesting aspects of the relationships between men in the Ferrar kin network is the responsibility that Nicholas and Arthur clearly felt for the young men in the family who were not their sons. Their concern for the older Collet brothers, at least two of whom were apprentices in London while their parents and the majority of their siblings were living at Little Gidding, is particularly notable.⁵⁰ As stated earlier in the chapter, Nick Collet was apprenticed to Arthur in the goldsmiths' business. His brother Ned, probably two years his senior (b.c.1604), was apparently indentured to some acquaintances, though it is not clear which trade he was learning. Their elder brother Tom (b.c.1600) was a barrister of the Middle Temple who lived with his wife Martha (née Sherington) in Highgate. And besides the Collets, Arthur was connected to apprentices from the Woodnoth family,

⁴⁹ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 10 May 1630, FP, r4, 722[227], part reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.255-56.

⁵⁰ A son, William, was born about 1605, between Ned and Nick, but he does not appear in the correspondence of the Little Gidding period.

probably the sons of his siblings. In a letter of 9 October 1634 he reported having bound his “Cosin Ben” to his master that morning and also noted a visit from “Cosin Raph” who was “from his master” at the time.⁵¹

Intrafamilial apprenticeship and the use of kinship links and family assets in general to provide for young men’s professional training were routine practices in middling and gentle families in early modern England. Taking relatives as apprentices was a convenient strategy which further concentrated resources within a kinship network, nurturing ties of personal, familial and professional obligation in the young trainees and thereby encouraging future service to kin, as much from individual loyalty to the master as through potential future connections within a given industry (the fact that an apprentice was a member of his master’s household should be borne in mind in this regard).⁵² With any luck, the arrangement would prove satisfactory and beneficial for all implicated parties, but most importantly for both the apprentice’s master and his parents. The risk of intra-familial rift was always inherent in the situation; enmity could issue from any party’s dissatisfaction with the terms of the agreement, the treatment of the apprentice, or his progress or conduct during training. Speculation as to the particular advantages and disadvantages of an apprenticeship administered within the broader family is of limited worth.⁵³ It suffices to state that, on the part of the apprentice, a heightened sense of duty to the master as both employer and relative and an oppressive sense of surveillance are conceivable, and perhaps more likely than his enjoying the latitude of a sympathetically-disposed superior. Familial apprenticeship may have been more advantageous for the family than to the individual young man.

During the seventeenth century, the sons of gentle families entered trades in increasing numbers out of economic necessity.⁵⁴ In families with many children such as John and Susanna Collet’s, and particularly for those with a significant number of younger sons, the situation was compelling.⁵⁵ Given the limited assets available to the Ferrar-Collets, it was inevitable that their boys would need apprenticeships. Further, the Ferrars were in a good position to call on their merchant friends and their own heritage in the liveries when placing sons. The Goldsmiths enjoyed higher status than did many other

⁵¹ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 9 October 1634, FP, r5, 956[538].

⁵² Grassby writes of English merchant families trading in the Levant: “Each generation of the family took on kin as apprentices and helped to set them up in Turkey”, “Love, Property & Kinship”, p.341.

⁵³ On the reticence that some families demonstrated to apprentice all of their sons to masters within the kin group, which could be detrimental to building social and economic connections, see Steve Rappaport, *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p.80-81 and Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, p.166.

⁵⁴ Joan Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914*, London: UCL Press, 1996, p.9; Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, p.88.

⁵⁵ On the problem of provision for younger sons, see Heal & Holmes, *Gentry*, pp.86-9.

companies, and the high apprenticeship premiums were commensurate with the prestige and influence available to its members.⁵⁶

Whilst apprentices, the Collet brothers frequently received letters from their mother, Susanna, exhorting them to good behaviour and perseverance in their situations. The volume of Susanna Collet's letters housed in the Bodleian Library, an eighteenth-century transcription, is a particularly rich collection of her correspondence with her sons. As has been mentioned, Susanna's letters to her children commonly begin with an explanation of why she is writing and not their father, John, or state that she writes on his behalf, and given the near complete absence of autograph documents in the archive of what must be acknowledged as a prolix family much inclined to writing, it is possible that John Collet had poorly developed writing skills.⁵⁷ Beyond the typical scope of maternal advice, Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos has written that professional advice was one of the mediums of support that members of the business community provided for apprentices in their kin groups.⁵⁸ If it was the case that Collet's literacy was limited, then it would have behoved other male relatives to take extra pains to maintain written communication and proffer advice to the young men in their father's stead. Paternal(istic) supervision was better referred, one suspects, through masculine agents and counsel better substituted with that of other dependable, and related, men. Basic logistics also came into play: Arthur lived in London and could more easily visit the Collet brothers, as well as being immediate master in trade and household head to those billeted with him. Nicholas Ferrar perhaps travelled more than John Collet did, and in any case was familiar with London. It is not clear how well Collet knew London, but his home and connections were in Bourn in Cambridgeshire, and he lived at Little Gidding.

In April 1630 Nicholas recommended "faithfull dilligence and thrifty performance of your masters Affayres" to his nephew Nick, "which doing you shall confirme and increase there Affections to you and I doubt not fynd the effects therof."⁵⁹ Exhortations to due diligence and good conduct in Arthur and Nicholas's letters amount to conventional moral direction, at once genuine and banal. But the cousins also anticipated sources of discord and discomfort for Nick and Ned, from isolation to mistreatment, in view of which their advice on behaviour can also be read as offering practical strategies for making the apprenticeship period more agreeable. Overall, the shared correspondence better indicates the supervisors' concerns than the experience of the apprentices. Far fewer letters that the

⁵⁶ Lane, *Apprenticeship*, pp.164-5.

⁵⁷ The exception is noted above: John Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 9 Feb 1632, FP, r4, 839[542], on behalf of Arthur Woodnoth.

⁵⁸ Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, "Gifts and Favors: Informal Support in Early Modern England", *Journal of Modern History* 72 (Jun 2000), p.306 and *Adolescence and Youth*, pp.168-70.

⁵⁹ Nicholas Ferrar to Nicholas Collet, 12 Apr 1630, FP, r4, 718[215-18].

Collet brothers wrote survive than those they received; they offer only glimpses at the critical moments at which they were sent or, more frequently, simply express formal deference to parents and masters. This is consistent with the pattern of their sisters' and other relatives' correspondence noted in chapter 5, by which, apart from communicating particular pieces of news or information, letters were a means of enacting ideal behaviour, which individuals used to perform duties of respect or exhortation according to their position in the familial hierarchy.

Evidently a variety of interests converged in the apprentice and his contract, more than those of the apprentice and his master alone. Nicholas was not simply altruistic in urging his nephews' good service in apprenticeship to Arthur. Safeguarding smooth relations between Arthur and the Ferrars and Collets was for the good of the extended network of family and friends, but most immediately impinged on the sustenance of the Little Gidding household. Nicholas's success at keeping the kinship system well-oiled reflected directly upon his proficiency as lynchpin and patriarchal figure within it and as such his continued empowerment. Aside from all of this he had a personal bond of friendship to maintain with Arthur. Conflict is unsurprising in the presence of such countervailing forces. At the particular juncture where Nick's "faithfull dilligence" was called for, the question of Arthur's career plans hung in the air. As Nicholas was concerned that Arthur should continue in his trade, it was prudent to attempt to exact good behaviour from his nephew, to ease friction arising between himself and Arthur, and between Nick and Arthur, and to encourage Arthur's general satisfaction with him, representative as he was of both family and business.

An indication of the extent to which the various members of the family were invested in the Collet brothers' satisfactory progress in their apprenticeships – or at least an indication of how important the Ferrars constructed the weight of family opinion as being in this regard – exists in the form of a letter penned by Nicholas on 3 May 1630.⁶⁰ In it, he informs Arthur of the family's desire that Nick Collet should see out the term of his apprenticeship under Arthur's supervision rather than being freed from his contract. As a token of their accord, the letter is countersigned by Mrs Ferrar, Susanna Collet, John Ferrar, and the sisters Mary (using her habitual alias, Mary Ferrar the younger), Anna, Margaret and Hester Collet. John Collet's signature or mark is conspicuous in its absence here, especially given the gravity of the business with one of his eldest sons. Nicholas makes a point of asserting the free choice in the matter of each signatory, disavowing coercion on his part, though the question remains as to how much genuine value was attributed to the opinions of the young women in this connection. His nephew Nick was

⁶⁰ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 3 May 1630, FP, r4, 719[221].

about 24 years old at this point, and having spent the previous four years in Arthur's shop, he was well-advanced in his apprenticeship (the 1563 Statute of Artificers specified a minimum period of seven years, but terms varied from as little as three to more than ten years in the seventeenth century).⁶¹ Had Nick left Arthur's employ, aside from ramifications within the family, a new master would have to be found, and money found for a new premium.

It was not Nick Collet who proved the greater worry to his family, however, but his older brother Ned. In April 1631, some four months since deliberations concerning Arthur's vocation had begun to dominate his correspondence with Nicholas, the continued viability of Ned's apprenticeship emerged as a more pressing concern. Ned, then a young man aged 27 years, liked to frequent alehouses and to gamble at cards, fulfilling the stereotype of the unruly apprentice with his carousing. Perhaps he was familiar with the other disreputable establishments of the city too. Such activities were, of course, very much disapproved of amongst the Ferrars, and scandalised his godly 38-year-old uncle. Sexual misdemeanours, moreover, might contaminate his master's orderly household, threatening to influence the character and behaviour of other young apprentices negatively, and to jeopardise the master's reputation. Beyond breaking the rules of apprenticeship, an unplanned pregnancy could lead to marriage and the establishment of another branch of the patrilineal family that had to be maintained.⁶²

From the first Nicholas's expressions indicated circumstances of unprecedented gravity:

I pray God direct this Bussiness to a good ende and when I shall have better considered of it shall father acquaynte you with that which god hath put into my mynde For truly without his especiall Illumination and Assistance in this matter I cannot hope wee should fynde the Best way for all partes.⁶³

Very soon the long-feared had happened: within the first few lines of a long letter of 19 April Nicholas proclaimed: "But all is now quite Blasted."⁶⁴ The specific nature of the disaster is not clear, but obviously Ned's leisure pursuits (possibly sexual activity) had adversely affected his work life. Matters had deteriorated to the extent that Nicholas made a declaration unparalleled in the archive, stating that he was at a loss as to which course to

⁶¹ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth*, p.130.

⁶² Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, p.241, and on the ideal of youthful celibacy, pp.237-50.

⁶³ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 14 Apr 1631, FP, r4, 772[356].

⁶⁴ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 19 Apr 1631, FP, r4, 774[359-64].

take, and revealing the particular distress of one accustomed to giving directions. “We are full of Greife but voyde of Counsell till God shall send light I know not which way to turne mee.” Ned’s well-doing could not be achieved – Nicholas’s expression reflects the conception of human character as a malleable substance, responsive to the impression of various guiding hands, upon which the culture of advice was founded. The family’s best efforts to elicit good conduct from Ned, however, had failed to move him.

As usual, Arthur was cast in the difficult role of Ferrar family representative in the attendant negotiations, “which wee ourselves for shame and greife know not how to enter uppon” (on this occasion Nicholas was moved to specify their deficiency). He wrote that he could not advise Ned’s parents on responding to their son’s situation; given contemporary notions of the scope of parental responsibility, his encroachment would not have been warranted. He did not hesitate to tell Arthur what he thought they should do, though, stating that he proffered his opinions in case they might help Arthur in his efforts for Ned. Before signing off, Nicholas took care to state that he would leave the business to the “good management” of God, Arthur, and Ned’s father, John Collet, and that he had “not acquaynted brother or sister Collett with any of thees things.” Nicholas was secretive about his knowledge and keen to distance himself from proceedings, later adding a postscript reading: “Since the finishing of this letter my Sister Collett [Ned’s mother] having by writing sett downe her mynde I have read unto them this letter which else I would not have don that I might not seeme to sett there resolutions in this matter.”

What should be done with Ned? Nicholas saw an opposition between Ned’s interests and those of the business. The latter would benefit if all parties made the best of the status quo, whereas Ned would do well to become conscious of his errors and to be established in a position where he was more comfortable. Morally, the trouble was that Ned was disinclined to repent for his misdeeds. Practically, the expense of the only solution that seemed likely – “A new master, a New Trade” – was prohibitive, as was the case for many gentry families whose sons breached the terms of their apprenticeships.⁶⁵ Besides, Nicholas despaired of Ned’s suitability for any work. “I cannot denie he is fit for noe Employment that I know except an Idle servingman. But I pray god hee may never prove – The broomsellers I [aye] and the dustmans profession is far better and more worthy than theres.” Nicholas was going to propose that his own delinquent brother, Richard, might consider moving to the Somers Islands (Bermuda), and wondered if any better plan than going there or to Virginia might be dreamt up for “this youthe”. He stated that Arthur would be wise to refuse Ned refuge in the meantime, and advised him to

⁶⁵ On the values enshrined in the apprenticeship contract, and the moral and practical implications of its breach, see Griffiths, *Youth and Authority*, pp.299-302.

bee more carefull for ever to keepe bad filthes out of your house then they that have playne sores. In this regard I cannot by any meanes think of bringing him hither – where are many frail dispositions as not onely to receive the Infection but alsoe perhapps to nourish his distempers – so that it would prove I am afrayde most prejudiciall ... Besydes I thinke it necessary by a severe discountenance to sett an Example to the youngest what they must goe uppon That there is noe favour to bee looked for but in welldoing.

In writing, Nicholas performed the role of a stern paternal figure with the best interests of the family at heart.

Nicholas banned Ned from the family's homes. He believed that the young people at Little Gidding were so inclined to sin and adopted an unforgiving approach to admonishing them against it, so Ned was not welcome there. Margaretting was out, especially as his sister Susanna would soon be in childbed. Staying at his brother Tom's house in Highgate was ruled out, presumably because there he would be too close to the temptations of the city. The Collet residence at Bourn, a village relatively remote from the metropolis and a house apparently free from impressionable siblings, was determined to be the best of the bad options.⁶⁶

Arthur sent a reply swiftly, commenting on the practicalities of finding Ned a new apprenticeship. He was contemplating an arrangement with Messrs Buckeridge and Strange, but warned that they would not be compelled to take Ned on without a bond "given for his faith which I must confesse I account so dangerous as I dare scarce desyre it."⁶⁷ Signing a good-behaviour bond was a weighty decision for relatives of apprentices who had already contravened the terms of indenture, because breaking such a bond might incur a steep penalty: in the later seventeenth century, as much as £500 for an apprentice goldsmith-banker.⁶⁸ The next day Arthur reported that negotiations were in progress, and that Ned spoke in favour of finding a new master.⁶⁹ Ned was partially aware of the discussions surrounding his fate, though the relative weight of his opinions was likely less than that of the senior men.

Nicholas sent Arthur his plan for "Bestowing Ned in some New service" on 25 April.⁷⁰ He stated again that he had shared his ideas with his brother John and Mary Collet,

⁶⁶ John and Susanna Collet had lived at Bourn in Cambridgeshire before moving to Little Gidding with most of their children in 1625. It is uncertain who was living at the Bourn house at this time but it is referred to sporadically in the archive and presumably Collet relatives still lived there or in the town if not in John and Susanna's house.

⁶⁷ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 21 April 1631, FP, r4, 776[368-70].

⁶⁸ Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660-1730*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, p.94.

⁶⁹ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 22 April 1631, FP, r4, 777[372].

⁷⁰ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 25 April 1631, FP, r4, 778[374-9].

Ned's sister, but not with Ned's parents, John and Susanna Collet, until after Susanna had written to him expressing her will. Once more it seems that Nicholas was not so much concerned to practice secrecy or privacy as to make sure that he did not overstep the limits of his influence in a matter where the choice of action was customarily the province of the apprentice's parents. He went so far as to quote himself, emphasising the extent of his deference with a rhetorical list: "Sister Collett I shall not be against the placing of your son in a new Course or with another Master if soe bee your husband or you or either of your desyre to make this triall". He claimed he endorsed finding Ned a new master only because the notion of sending him to the Somers Islands caused his parents so much grief, "strong Violence of Affections bursting forth in teares both from my brother and sister Collett as did I confess much amaze mee, and afright me considering that it was an ill preparation to loose our selves when wee goe about to save others." Perhaps Nicholas had no concept of parental affection. In recounting the emotional outburst he betrays contempt for John and Susanna Collet's decision-making capacity, a process requiring calm rationality, despite continuing to dissociate himself from the task. The Collets were obviously afraid that he would dispose of their son far away. Nicholas cautioned against overmuch assurance in the plan for a new master but added the assertion that he would never send Ned to the Somers Islands or to Virginia or anywhere else without the consent of a least a majority of his mother, father, sisters and brothers (he added brothers as an afterthought). Nicholas went on to remind Arthur that he, Arthur, was only an agent of John Collet, acting in good will, and that Arthur should not take special pains to secure a new placement for Ned.

Not satisfied with the five pages of his first letter, Nicholas wrote again to Arthur that afternoon. The second letter suggests that he had thought more about the risks to Arthur that entailed by his involvement with Ned. "[B]e well advised and doe not overthrow your owne Contente, Estate, or Creditt for the setting upp of anothers" came the familiar refrain, bluntly this time.⁷¹ The spirit of the letter is surprisingly ungenerous. Nicholas warned Arthur not to labour in the hope of spiritual profit: "Now it is miserable for a man to spende the strength of his soule in the suing for that which belongs not to himselfe in the Fruition neither at present nor for after Consolation or reward from God". He may have been cautioning Arthur against erroneous belief in the efficacy of good works, but evidence of a remarkably self-serving ethos is more apparent. He was strident in pressing the point upon Arthur and concluded the missive with a forceful reaffirmation of the soundness of the advice he had dispensed that morning.

It is difficult not to conclude that Nicholas deemed Arthur useful primarily as a medium for executing his own designs (and those of certain other senior family members),

⁷¹ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 25 April 1631, FP, r4, 779[381-3].

and, despite the many times he deferred to Arthur's judgment on paper, did not want him to perform a directive role in family affairs. At least in what he wrote, Arthur, bound by convention but in no way therefore necessarily lacking genuine respect for him, complied with Nicholas's bidding. "I humbly thank you for the good advise I received by your letter which I conceive is every way profitable for mee."⁷² After these letters in late April 1631, a silence in the archive with regard to Ned suggests that matters were left unresolved.

By January 1632 Ned had changed, but not for the better. Arthur found him at the Temple "amongst the gamesters But so altered in his Habitt" that he ran away.⁷³ "I went into Southwarke" he recounted to Nicholas, "and att the place where before I mett him I understood he had bene there to looke his companion a while before I came." What now should be done? "God shall reward you, for your Love and Paynes touching our unhappy Nephew" Nicholas reassured him.⁷⁴ He counselled caution: keep assisting Ned "but doe not any ways engage yourselfe in or uppon desyre of gaining or securing him from evill Compagny give him opportunity to do you a mischeife, receive him not therfore into your house". Ned may have had debts to pay and thus presented a threat of theft, but undoubtedly his presence was understood to be corrupting, likely to infect any other apprentices lodged in Arthur's house with his wickedness.

Though Nicholas, Arthur and the family at Little Gidding were busy with the production of an illustrated Bible concordance at the time, which "kept both Mynde and handes Imployde", Ned was never far from their thoughts.⁷⁵ Permanent resolution of the matter was never more wanting. It came precipitously, and, it seems, issued from Ned's initiative (though perhaps he gave in to pressing from his family). Something moved Arthur to pious exultation in his letter of 20 January 1632, but it is only in the postscript to his missive the next day that its basis is revealed: "My Cosen Ned last night received his tiggett for his admission into the ship and this morning was purpose[d] to goe with him which god in mercy prosper."⁷⁶ Nicholas welcomed the news, thanking God for the "opportunity he affords for our Nephews coming upp from the Pitt of Destruction".⁷⁷ Ned had embarked on his new course by the end of March 1632, when he wrote from the Downs, outward bound, telling his father of his journey aboard ship so far.⁷⁸ Notwithstanding the ever-present threat that the actions of individual members posed to a family's fortunes, Nicholas seized the chance to reassert the collective good that he wished to present as the

⁷² Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 28 April 1631, FP, r4, 780[385].

⁷³ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 14 Jan 1632, FP, r4, 830[521].

⁷⁴ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth (draft), 16 Jan 1632, FP, r4, 832[524-5].

⁷⁵ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 6 Feb 1632, FP, r4, 838[539-40] (draft).

⁷⁶ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 21 Jan 1632, FP, r4, 835[531].

⁷⁷ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 23 Jan 1632, FP, r4, 836[533-5] (draft).

⁷⁸ Edward Collet to John Collet, 27 Mar 1632, FP, r4, 848[562].

foundation of his ethos, stating that he knew all Arthur's efforts regarding Ned must have stemmed from his concern for the whole family. Should the delinquency of an individual become notorious, the family of origin was open to condemnation for poor governance and laxity of morals, and in the case of the Ferrar-Collets, negative reputation would destroy the honour of the many young women of Little Gidding, and thus their prospects of making good marriages.⁷⁹

Ned reappears in the archive two years later. He was in India, having sailed under the authority of the East India Company. John Collet sent a letter for Ned to one of his other sons in London, probably Tom, asking him to deliver it to the Chief Secretary of the Company, Mr Ellam, who would ensure it was carried to the Company's Chief Factor in Armagon, on the south-eastern coast of India. Tom was also to visit a Mr Benyfeld, who would write a letter to a Mr Methwuld on Collet's behalf, inquiring about Ned's employment.⁸⁰ Methwuld apparently held a senior office in the Company at Surat, on the east coast. The family had hoped Ned had been retained there, Collet said, but his last letter was dated at Armagon, and he had not given any details of his employment or whether or not he was reformed.⁸¹

One further letter from Ned survives, addressed to his father and dated at the Masulipatam roads on 30-31 August 1636. He detailed his employment: two years a soldier at Surat and Armagon, and nearly two years as steward of Armagon, adding "and I give god praise I have lived in good repute. I have been accommodated with the best always sitting at the table".⁸² On 30 July he had swapped his position as steward for that of purser's mate on the ship *Swan*, which had lately docked there carrying a letter from his father. By doing so he hoped to improve his fortunes, not "in welth but in imployment which will be a meanes to bring me in good Creditt with our honourable masters, which I know is all my freinds desire". He mentioned receiving letters from his parents and brothers and sisters, and told them to send no more as he planned to sail for England as soon as possible. The next day he amended the letter from aboard the ship *Expedition*, setting out for "the bay of bengala"; he had been offered the choice of three more years at Armagon or a new post at Bantam (Java), and had opted for the latter.

⁷⁹ The most outstanding contemporary parallel, and notorious at the time, was the moral corruption of members of Lord Castlehaven's household, for which see Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder*.

⁸⁰ John Collet to his son (Thomas?), 20 Mar 1634, FP, r5, 992[622].

⁸¹ The East India Company first docked in Surat in 1608, and had displaced the Portuguese there and established a factory by 1613. The Armagon factory was established on the Coromandel Coast in 1626 (the English had other factories on the same coast, including Masulipatam, re-established in 1632 and Fort St George, near Madraspatnam (now Chennai [Madras]), founded in early 1640. See Philip Lawson, *The East India Company: A History*, London & New York: Longman, 1993.

⁸² Edward Collet to John Collet, 30-31 Aug 1636, FP, r5, 1037[737-40].

Ned's letter may have given his parents some small comfort, but he did not hesitate to acquaint them with the truth of his sentiments with a frankness perhaps born of bitter experience:

[M]y sisters may assure them selves and considder that if paper & labour bee Deare in England much more in these forraine hott Countryes where a man is not able to wright one line but doth Cost him hott water[. B]ut I doe perswade my selfe that this will never bee forgotten[:] that those that are in Prosperity never remember those that are in adversity for a man shall never know a frend beefore hee bee in want, many verbally but noone really and as for my owne part I have ever binn seence I came out of England in that mind that a peny of a mans own getting is moore sett by them a greater some given of other mens labors, for hee that one knows the getting I doe assure my self will allsoe know the spending of it.

Ned struck out at what he saw to be the empty words, reluctant charity and comfortable, idle lives of his family, betraying particular resentment of his sisters. He admitted to having misbehaved, but claimed to be heartily sorry for it, begging his parents to “impute it to my Minority”, despite having been 27 years of age at the time of his offence, and closed his letter with appropriate formality.

Age, Honour and Manhood

In asking his parents to indulge the folly of youth, Ned appealed to the commonplace understanding that youth was an age of high-spirited excess and poor judgement. Young men in particular were always at risk of serious transgression of thought and deed.⁸³ As a group, apprentices bore the associated stigma of disorderliness and immorality Ned's punishment was severe, as might be expected given the high value the rest of his family imputed to upright behaviour, but most noteworthy is the diligence with which he was pursued by his kinsmen Nicholas and Arthur. Ned was 27 years old when he stirred his uncle Nicholas into pronouncements of disaster, approaching the marrying age of men of his social station. Had he completed his training, he would have been well-positioned to establish himself in trade and sought a wife, thus qualifying for adult manhood. Nicholas and Arthur were respectively 38 and 41 years old at the time. The relatively small difference in age between Ned and his kinsmen was at odds with the gulf in honour and status which they affirmed in their harrying. Nicholas was de facto household head at Little Gidding and Arthur was a successful liveryman, business proprietor and master to other apprentices, and both were pillars of their virtuous family; as such they could claim honourable

⁸³ Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, pp.23-4.

manhood. Yet it is plausible that, apart from their will to see the family aright, Arthur and Nicholas were doubly fervent in with regard to Ned because neither was married or very much older than him. Notwithstanding the primary responsibility that his parents bore for Ned, for Arthur and Nicholas, the proof of their manhood and seniority lay in their successful management of the crisis.

The trouble with Ned and his misdemeanours was not isolated; beyond monitoring the young apprentices of the family, other men's difficulties and delinquency were a constant concern for Arthur and Nicholas. Nicholas's brother Richard was a permanent problem. The youngest and least reliable of the surviving Ferrar brothers, Richard was repeatedly out of work and in debt in London. His letters of entreaty to family members appear sporadically throughout the Ferrar archive, invariably asking for material relief or their intercession with authorities or debtors on his behalf. Though very much an adult in years (born c.1595, Richard was 30 years old when the rest of his family left London), Richard was one of Arthur's charges. For example, probably early in 1628, soon after Richard had shared that New Year's resolution to mend his profligate ways (it was a pledge that he repeated),⁸⁴ his older sister, Susanna Collet, wrote to Arthur to thank him for helping and advising Richard and requesting that the same should continue.⁸⁵

Relations with Richard were seldom easy. Elizabeth, Richard's wife, wrote to Arthur in November 1629, begging money from him in an unspecified emergency to pay for the carriage of some goods.⁸⁶ Her request was met with suspicion. When plague struck London in the summer of 1636, Richard wrote to his brothers John and Nicholas explaining that trade had come to a halt and he was destitute. Many people had fled the city and those who remained were unwilling to buy his household stuff, and in any case there was hardly any food to be got. In the name of God and their parents, Richard implored his brothers:

by that fraternall bond wherein wee stand united, but that common & universall bond of Christianity as wee are members of Christes body, that you would ether give us leave to come downe to Giddinge to remayne there with you until God cease the sickness [or pay me enough each week to buy food] ... (one of you is a husband & a father of Children) what hart percinge it is to see your wife and littell ones weepinge the one, the other crying for Bread and not bee able to give it them.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Richard Ferrar to Mary Ferrar, 31 Dec 1627, FP, r3, 632[29], promising to turn over a new leaf.

⁸⁵ Susanna Collet to Arthur Woodnoth, n.d. - early 1628?, FP, r3, 634[33].

⁸⁶ Elizabeth Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 2 Nov 1629, FP, r4, 691[153].

⁸⁷ Richard Ferrar to John & Nicholas Ferrar, <18 Jun 1636 (received 18 Jun 1636), FP, r5, 1021 (697-701).

Richard and Elizabeth had two small children, one just weaned, and Richard tried hard to convince his brothers that he was not exaggerating the gravity of the situation. He debased himself before them, because he could perform his fatherly duty of supporting his own family. If helping him was too inconvenient or simply beyond the generosity of his brothers, his family would have to live on the parish or the pesthouse, Richard said. Such an eventuality would have been a disgrace to the rest of the Ferrars, socially and as Christians. But surely “there cann bee noe such inhumanity in Brothers though pagans. Morrality would shrink at the hearing of it: divinity be amazed”.⁸⁸

On 19 June 1636, the day after receiving Richard’s letter, Nicholas wrote at length a letter addressed to all his “Deare Friends at Gidding. This letter concerning you all for Compassion, for Example and For assistance sake I beseech you take it into serious Consideration. Beleive the Misery in parte and Feare itt will bee more then is [true].”⁸⁹ Claiming it was a matter on which all would have a say, he laid out a balance sheet detailing the Ferrars’ financial situation, including incoming rents, debts and sums promised as maintenance for particular family members. Over £400 in assets were counterbalanced by more than £1600 of debts. He concluded, in the first person: “But surely neither my brother Richard nor any others can with any good conscience expect from mee any greate matters.” He proposed to give Richard three shillings per week during the visitation, but believed that God would provide if only Richard was humble and penitent, and asked for his relatives’ opinions in writing. Based on his study of payments to the poor of Ipswich in the 1590s and Salisbury in the 1630s, Paul Slack has concluded that the town authorities “assumed that 8d. to 1s. a week was the cost of subsistence for an adult, and 4d. to 6d. a week for a child; and they used the dole to bring family incomes up to at least that level.”⁹⁰ Given that Richard and his family lived in London where the cost of living was already higher than in provincial towns, and faced inflated prices for goods during the pestilence, Nicholas’s three-shilling offer was hardly generous.

Three days later Nicholas wrote separate letters to Arthur and Richard, informing them that Richard could collect a weekly allowance from Arthur henceforward. He did not specify the sum to Richard, but said it was more than what they lived on at Gidding. He recommended penitence, delivering the conventional formula of “Turning to God in Fasting weeping and praying” with astonishing insensitivity given the context. Meanwhile, he told Arthur that each week he should give Richard five shillings and good counsel.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Nicholas Ferrar to his family at Little Gidding, 19 Jun 1636, FP, r5, 1022[703-6].

⁹⁰ Paul Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Early Stuart England*, London & New York: Longman, 1988, p.81.

John Woodnoth, Arthur's eldest brother and the lord of the Woodnoth estate at Shavington, Cheshire, was Nicholas and Arthur's other chief care. He is particularly prominent in their correspondence of the summer of 1631. At the same time Arthur was worried by his cousin George Woodnoth, and Nicholas was thinking about Richard. Arthur wrote repeatedly requesting Nicholas's advice, in part because, like Nicholas, he experienced a lack of trust for his brother that he thought incompatible with piety and charity.⁹¹ John had asked to borrow money from Arthur, whereas George seems to have presented the usual challenges of an apprentice. Nicholas described George as a "youth", and Arthur listed the need to address damages he had wrought in the past and to get bonds guaranteeing his good behaviour in future for his master.⁹² Unlike Ned Collet, this errant boy would be allowed to stay at Little Gidding until his placement was settled, though Nicholas's advised that if George was "liing about this Towne Idly and wickedly", Arthur should seek the Chamberlain's help and have him sent to Bridewell, "there to learne to doe good for himselfe and to be [prevented] from harming others."⁹³ In the same letter, he decided that it might be a good time to set Richard "to some Handycrafte – a forger, graver, jewellmaker, wyer drawer or upholsterer, sadler, imbroyderer, girdler or plumer, brazier, founder."

John Woodnoth was practically unmanned when he first asked Nicholas and Arthur's help to find him employment in May. Injured and a widower since the death of his wife in January 1630, and thus unable to effect a solution by which he would be able to provide for his family, John had to throw himself upon the mercy of his relatives and relinquish self-determination in favour of their discretion.⁹⁴ Instead of offering advice, as one might to an equal, Nicholas presented him with a statement of options. John responded, averring that his choice of life would be such as "my friends shall approve – Leaving the issue to gods blessing and myne owne Industry."⁹⁵ As it turned out, John was unhappy with the terms of the arrangement and did not hesitate to acquaint his brother with his disappointment, as recounted in chapter 2, above (p.83). In a letter of 2 August 1631 he wrote that though he accepted Arthur's counsel and admonition "kyndely and thankfully", he was dissatisfied with efforts made to relieve him with a place in Sir John Danvers' household.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 6 June 1631, FP, r4, 789[407].

⁹² Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 6 June 1631, FP, r4, 790[410]; Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 6 June 1631, FP, r4, 791[411-15].

⁹³ Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth, 13 June 1631, FP, r4, 795[428-33].

⁹⁴ On his wife's death, see John Woodnoth to Mary Ferrar, 18 Jan 1630, FP, r4, 701[173].

⁹⁵ Statement of expectations (Nicholas Ferrar) and reply (John Woodnoth), 25 May 1631, FP, r4, 784[393-5].

⁹⁶ John Woodnoth to Arthur Woodnoth, 2 Aug 1631, FP, r4, 803[458-61].

According to a late November letter to Nicholas, John Woodnoth's circumstances had not improved. John thanked Nicholas for his expressions of love as a kinsman in spite of the enmity that had arisen between John and Arthur, but added that he could not say Nicholas's advice "was at all Profitable".⁹⁷ He barely concealed his resentment that Nicholas and Arthur had not done more to alleviate his suffering, claiming that he and the children were worse off than before: "Which I do not laye to your charge or my Brothers, whose Intents (I knowe) were in their beginnings (if they had bene accordingly pursued) Loving, and to have done me some acceptable Good & benefit; albeit in the event they otherwise have proved." Within a week he wrote again to his aunt, Mary Ferrar (née Woodnoth), invoking Woodnoth obligation with regard to his impoverishment, which, he stated, would be "the damage & disparagement, of my children and posteritie after" him.⁹⁸

Conclusion

Arthur Woodnoth and Nicholas Ferrar superintended moral and financial order of the family at Little Gidding and members of a broader web of kin. In doing so they wrought for themselves vital and virtually unchallenged identities as leading men within their family, as household heads, providers of information and material sustenance, despite not complying with the conjugal standard for masculine adulthood. Their personal relationship was strong and respectful, though Nicholas assumed the dominant position. Their

⁹⁷ John Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 24 Nov 1631, FP, r4, 823[507-8].

⁹⁸ John Woodnoth to Mary Ferrar, 30 Nov 1631, FP, r4, 825[511-12]. Like John, Mary had grown up on the family estate at Shavington in Cheshire. John was the first child of her younger brother, also John, from whom her nephew had inherited the property. He lived there still, and his appeal to her connection with the district was unambiguous. He always employed a plaintive idiom to describe his manifold troubles, including the loss of his wife. Notwithstanding the hyperbole, it is difficult to question the pathos of a relation he made in July 1630 (John Woodnoth to Mary Ferrar, 12 Jul 1630, FP, r4, 730[247-8]). He described the terrible depression of fortunes throughout his region, and in particular the unhappy lot of fellow gentry families.

I, fynding otherwhyse some intermission, from the curses of a poore & pensive Lyfe; Such Comforts as God hath yet Left me, by the Lyves of my survyving and most endeared frends, suggest themselves to my thoughts I have little heere hence to impart unto you, besides the healthes of our few frendes heere Left, for if I should relate unto you the great changes & Ruynes of names, families and fortunes, that hath hapned to our kynred of nearest consanguinitie, in this our Parish & place of Nativitie; and compare the tymes present, with those which our yong yeares have seene; it might move passion in you, as sometimes it doth in mee: The halls of Stapeley, Hatherton, Burkeford, & now Lea, and the Lordes of them (being of our ancycntest & Nearest alliance,) utterly extirped; their dwellings turned into dayryhouses and their Pewes in the church standing on the Sabbath day voyd & empty, besides divers other families of gentlemen of this parish of my fathers tyme & knowledge; not any now flourishing, & left, but the house of Duddinton onelie, Mr Griffyn of Burtherton, and my self, both of us, groaning under the burden of ebbing & declyned estates.

Shavington, Stapeley, Hatherton, Burford, Lea, Batherton and Doddington are all in the environs of Nantwich in South Cheshire.

communication with one another was governed by contemporary conventions of address, etiquette and rhetorical strategies (for example, qualifying the wisdom of a piece of advice to appear modest); however, on occasion these standards were confounded, both by personality and by necessity. Whilst Arthur was inclined to preface a request for counsel with a statement such as “there is no man better knows my weakenes and imbecillyty then you”,⁹⁹ calling upon their close bond and in doing so reinforcing it, Nicholas generally stated his opinions more directly and seldom made confessions of weakness. Despite not having to readjust the terms of their friendship to accommodate wives (on the contrary, their shared purpose and similar situation with respect to their family and its sustenance), Nicholas was proprietorial regarding his clerical calling. On the whole, though, their relationship was less defined by competing for honour than Foyster has observed of the friendships of other adult men.¹⁰⁰

Unlike their sisters at Little Gidding, the young men of the Ferrar-Collet family lived in the world. The religious family could not control their environment or guarantee their conduct. In such stark relief, it is not surprising, that Nicholas and Arthur’s responsibility to supervise them was very serious. The Ferrars were acutely concerned for their reputation, and these least pious of their blood were their few ambassadors in the capital. Similarly, the moral health of their menfolk had to be maintained, rather to keep from infecting the rest of the family than for the good of the individuals, judging by Nicholas’s readiness to ban Ned Collet and Richard and his wife and children from the household at Little Gidding. The examples of this chapter amply demonstrate the labour of attaining and preserving manhood, not only for Arthur and Nicholas, but also for their brothers, John Woodnoth and Richard Ferrar, and the young Collets, and the difficulty of doing so in the face of a variety of complicating factors, from bachelorhood to insolvency. Needless to say, these complicated histories of manhood and evidence of tensions between men of the family do not feature in John Ferrar’s *Life* or elsewhere in the historiography of the Ferrars.

⁹⁹ Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, 25 May 1631, FP, r4, 785[397].

¹⁰⁰ Foyster, *Manhood*, p.127-30.

REFLECTION

Ferrar identities: multiplicity, adaptation, reinvention

Nicholas Ferrar died on 4 December 1637. At the end of 1637, only eleven family members remained: John and Susanna Collet with perhaps four of their children – their two celibate daughters Mary and Anna, who were in their late thirties, and probably the two youngest children, 16-year-old John and 13-year-old Judith – together with John and Bathsheba Ferrar and their children Nicholas jun., Virginia and John, aged 17, 11 and seven years respectively. It is not clear how many of the servants and poor widows were still present after that date, or whether the three schoolmasters engaged to teach the boys remained. D.R. Ransome suggests that at this point the “educational schemes probably ceased”.¹ The loss of the respected and charismatic personality at its core, soon followed by the death of Anna Collet (in 1639), one of Nicholas’s keenest devotees, effectively signalled the end of the Ferrars’ experiment in domestic religion for which Little Gidding is remembered.

Mary Collet, Nicholas’s niece and chief collaborator, and in practice the lady of the house, was attuned to her uncle’s priorities, well-equipped with the skills necessary to keep the household running smoothly and indeed accustomed to doing so. Yet she could little better impose her will upon the other family members or elicit dedication from them than she could prevent the effects of life-cycle change or block various extramural forces. The members of the household faced obstacles ranging from the basic matter of remaining solvent to adapting their routine to fit with their reduced number and their shifting stages of life. The family was depleted as a result of deaths and the marriage and removal of the majority of John and Susanna Collet’s daughters to conjugal homes. The moral and practical formation of the pool of unwed sisters present at Little Gidding had been, in the initial years there, the ostensible object of many of the everyday activities in the household, but these concerns were no longer relevant by the time Nicholas died. The constant task of maintaining contact with kin living beyond the estate had expanded, and different activities rose to prominence too, such as the creation of Biblical concordances. Nicholas Ferrar had instituted the activity when most of the Collet sisters were in residence, and in the years

¹ D.R. Ransome, “John Ferrar”, p.22.

immediately following his death, concordance-making grew to occupy much of the time of Mary Collet, John Ferrar and John's son Nicholas jun.²

Besides attending to the good functioning of the family, the Ferrars also needed to monitor external perceptions of their household, and the imperative increased as the household shrank in size in the 1640s and the political climate changed. In addition to the effects of the general disorder of the Civil Wars, they faced a particular threat of violence and persecution throughout the period for their conspicuous and seemingly unconventional interpretation of religious conformity.³ Their situation was not improved by the predominance of the parliamentary cause in East Anglia.⁴

Apart from the reputation they earned from speculation surrounding the nature of their religious practices, the Ferrars' royalist and Laudian sympathies could easily have been inferred from their production of Scriptural concordances for members of the royal family. In May 1636 Dr Cosin and Archbishop Laud themselves presented Charles I with the gospel harmony he had commanded of the Ferrars.⁵ The King was pleased enough to request a similar volume integrating the Old Testament books of Kings and Chronicles, which John and his son Nicholas duly created and gave him in person at Whitehall on 2 April 1640, just prior the commencement of the Short Parliament.⁶ Moreover, Charles went to Little Gidding twice during the 1640s as Parliament waxed ascendant. He visited first with the Prince of Wales and Prince Rupert on his way to Yorkshire in March 1642, before the opening skirmishes of the First Civil War. He returned some four years later on 2 May 1646 in far more precarious circumstances, seeking safe haven having fled Oxford. By that time, despite not being involved in the conflict, John Ferrar, Mary Collet and John's teenaged children Virginia and John had spent part of the period from 1643 to 1645 in

² For contemporary treatments of the Little Gidding harmonies see J. Ransome, "Monotessaron", and Paul Dyck, "So rare a use".

³ Recently, D.R. Ransome has disputed the long-held assumption that Little Gidding church was ransacked by Cromwellian soldiers in 1646. See the website of Little Gidding Church for details. <http://www.littlegiddingchurch.org.uk/lgchtmlfiles/detailfiles/lgcpopuptextpage1.html/> (accessed Oct 15, 2006).

⁴ Huntingdon was the birthplace of the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell and the family lived in the area. The future Protector spent some time as a child at Hinchbrooke House where his uncle, Sir Oliver, lived; Hinchbrooke was granted to Richard Cromwell at the Dissolution. John Ferrar reported on some business in Huntingdon with a Mr Croumell late in 1626. According to Blackstone "The reference is almost certainly to Oliver Cromwell." Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, p.247, n.1. John Ferrar to Nicholas Ferrar, 21 Nov 1626, FP, r3, 602[674-5]. Oliver Cromwell was not at home and the messenger, Richard, had to deal with his sisters, who "rayled exceedingly at him". Little more can be conjectured regarding the Ferrars' relationship with Cromwell.

⁵ The book survives in the British Library: BL MS C.23.e.4. The presentation is recounted in Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.79. Nicholas and his cousin Arthur Woodnoth's letters concerning Arthur's delivery of the volume are amongst the Ferrar Papers: Nicholas Ferrar to Arthur Woodnoth (draft), 12 May 1636, FP, r5, 1016[681-2]; Arthur Woodnoth to Nicholas Ferrar, n.d. (mid-May 1636?), FP, r5, 1017[683].

⁶ D.R. Ransome, "John Ferrar", p.22. The royal concordance of Kings and Chronicles is also in the British Library: BL MS Royal Appendix 65.

exile in Holland. At home again, in 1650 John Ferrar and Mary Collet even mounted a short-lived project, after the regicide, to bind and sell copies of *Eikon Basilike*.⁷

John Ferrar and his sister Susanna Collet died in 1657, and Little Gidding passed to John's eldest surviving son, John jun., who apparently lived on the profits of its leases, and any investments his father may have left to him.⁸ His sister Virginia, who owned some land in Bermuda, lived alone in a small house on the estate.⁹ Like her cousins Mary and Anna Collet, she never married. John jun.'s son, Thomas, entered holy orders and was rector of Steeple Gidding and Little Gidding between 1691 and 1707, following his kinsmen Edward Wallis (husband of Joyce Collet) and Ferrar Collet, in the office.¹⁰ Thomas's brother John, his father's heir, was the last Ferrar to own Little Gidding, which passed out of his hands in 1748.

* * * * *

Whereas the previous two chapters have focused closely on the relationships between certain members of the Ferrar family and the formation of individual identity in the context of these family-based relationships, it remains to offer some final comments regarding the larger-scale perspective, reflecting upon the identity of the family as a whole. The object of this discussion is to assess the effects of the Ferrars' shift from London to Little Gidding, by considering continuities and changes in the family's identity in the period to Nicholas Ferrar's death in December 1637.

John and Nicholas Ferrar took pains to prepare the Ferrars' appearance for posterity, respectively by writing a formal history that emphasised holiness, the *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*, and by controlling the documents kept in the family archive. Judging from the effort they expended, determining family identity was matter of importance, pertinent both within and beyond the family. Scrutinising the Ferrars' familial identity reveals that in practice they invoked identity from a variety of sources, ranging from the patriarch's distinction as a metropolitan merchant to their gentle heritage in Mrs Ferrar's birth family, the Woodnoths, effectively presenting multiple façades. Such plurality was at odds with the unity of image and purpose to which they aspired as the hallmark of their ostensibly single-

⁷ D.R. Ransome, "John Ferrar", p.23.

⁸ No will survives for John Ferrar.

⁹ A.L. Maycock, *Chronicles of Little Gidding*, London: SPCK, 1954, p.102.

¹⁰ A list of rectors of St John the Evangelist, Little Gidding, is available at the church's website: <http://www.littlegiddingchurch.org.uk/lgchtmlfiles/lghist2.html> (accessed May 12, 2007). Edward Wallis was the incumbent from 1651-9, followed immediately by Ferrar Collet, until his cession in 1663.

mindful determination to place the service of God at the core of their shared life. There are inconsistencies in the picture of the family that its members constructed in their everyday activities and in their writings, including those in the biography through which John Ferrar sought to present a fixed and unified image, which echo incongruities between the spiritual ideal to which the Ferrars aspired and the reality of their temporally-located family life. Further, this multifariousness is unaccounted for in traditional renderings of Little Gidding's history, and should be incorporated into the agenda for further historical investigation.

Whilst they lived in London, the Ferrars were an entrepreneurial family. Their acquaintances were fellow merchants, guild members, MPs, and the gentlemen and peers whose interest in profit attracted them to ventures such as the Virginia Company's project for New World settlement and trade. As a young man Nicholas Ferrar had benefited from the hospitality of members of the network of English merchants posted across continental Europe and built up a favourable reputation amongst them. When, on his return to London circa 1617, Nicholas "showed himself upon the Exchange to thank those merchants of whose factors he had received so much courtesy and monies, his action and qualities were much taken notice of and his father [Nicholas Ferrar sen.] being an eminent merchant in the City he grew known to most men."¹¹ John Ferrar had enjoyed early success in the community of overseas traders and it was through his Hamburg posting that he met his business partner, Sheppard, whose sister became John's first wife.

But when the Ferrars left the city, their fortunes had turned for the worst; John's grip on his father's commercial concerns had faltered and the Virginia Company, in which much of their hope and capital had been lodged, was terminated. Their means and investments depleted, and none of them any longer involved in regular trade, the Ferrars' mercantile identity was effectively obsolete. At Little Gidding, religious observance was pre-eminent amongst their activities and concerns, and it is primarily as Christians that many of the documents from that phase suggest they conceived of themselves and wished to be known. Their retirement from business was construed as a conscious renunciation of materialism, and their commitment to prayer in place of secular occupations combined penitence, thanksgiving, and virtuous resolution.

Throughout this study there is evidence of the Ferrars' constant work of shifting, reconceiving, adapting and reiterating their family identity while they lived at Little Gidding. Constructing identity was a daily process, exemplified in the Ferrars' use of correspondence to define the extent of the family and to monitor its good order, ensuring that members' behaviour was appropriate to their gender, age and position in the familial

¹¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.52.

hierarchy. By wearing uniform clothing, the women displayed outwardly the ideals of humility and unity. The same solidarity was enacted in the uniformity of household routine, which was based on simultaneous collective activities: work, meals, worship, discussion, and prayer. As an expression of concord, sisters composed letters together and signed them jointly.¹² Monies were pooled, the pragmatic measure cast as symbol of corporate-mindedness, “one purse” signifying “one mind”.¹³ As has been demonstrated, for example, in her decision to live unmarried Mary Collet circumvented the need to sink her financial assets into a marital union and family of her own, but nonetheless she invested her personal funds in the subsistence of her relatives at Little Gidding, in particular providing for her youngest siblings, Ferrar and Judith, and her adopted daughter (niece) Mary Mapletoft.

Whilst a new emphasis on unity and the primacy of spiritual matters matched the Little Gidding ethos, the significance of other, worldlier bases of identity persisted. The paradoxical reality of the Ferrars’ situation was that maintaining their established connections was important for their economic and social survival, notwithstanding the fact that doing so was substantially inconsistent with their religious ideals. The difficulty was inevitable, because abandoning former temporal concerns was embedded in the discursive construction of the Christian process of reformation of life that they had adopted. It was a rationale that heightened the incongruity of continuities that might otherwise be valued, such as upholding a proud mercantile heritage, whilst changes, such as abstaining from the cycle of reciprocal visiting and entertainment that constituted gentry sociability, could be sanctioned as signs of reform. Consequently, the familial identity that resulted from the process was unstable, as elements of the Ferrars’ existences past and present were selectively accentuated.

Thus, as has been shown, John Ferrar asserted his father’s distinction as a host in the *Life*, reflecting the secular value of social approbation and material success. Nicholas Ferrar sen. had hosted “not only company of his own rank but often had men of eminency to dine with him, yea, lords, knights, ladies, etc.”¹⁴ John’s claim befits a son’s pride in his father who competently laid the fiscal foundations of a healthy patrimony, but hardly accords with the austere ethic of Little Gidding (despite the relative cultural sanction of the accumulation of capital otherwise available to the godly Protestant family). Overall, John placed comparatively little emphasis on Nicholas Ferrar sen., and indeed references to the

¹² For example, Mary, Anna & Hester Collet to Margaret Collet, 1 Jun 1629, FP, r4, 674(119); and the equivalent, Nicholas speaking to all the sisters in a letter addressed only to Anna, mentioned in chapter 6, p.183: Nicholas Ferrar to Anna Collet, 1 Jun 1631, FP, r4, 788[406], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.258-9.

¹³ John Ferrar to Theophilus Woodnoth, 30 Jan 1626, FP, r3, 587[640].

¹⁴ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.42.

Ferrar patriarch in other family documents from Little Gidding, including correspondence, are negligible. He appears most notably as a spectre, summoned by his widow in letters to their son Richard, exhorting or threatening him to honourable conduct.

The ascetic ideal of abandoning the world was instrumental in defining the corporate identity of the community at Little Gidding. Their flight from worldliness and commerce, perhaps comprising a note of shame at their loss of what the patriarch had provided, and their commitment to frugality and modesty in interpreting the Christian life led the Ferrars to diminish the significance of Nicholas Ferrar sen. and his apparently successful career upon which their material comfort was founded. Thus, though Nicholas Ferrar sen.'s connections in mercantile London served his family well and his interest in overseas ventures persisted in at least in some of his descendants, in an unconventional turn, his memory as family patriarch was largely excluded at Little Gidding. Likewise, it was expunged from the rehearsed account that his heirs bequeathed to their descendants and to the historical record. He was displaced in both contexts by his namesake son.

In fact, during their years at Little Gidding the Ferrars did maintain contact with the outside world. Just as John could write that in 1625 his brother "Nicholas Ferrar had his head full not only of the public but of the private affairs of his family", during his life at Little Gidding Nicholas's concern remained fixed on internal and external matters alike.¹⁵ He visited London frequently, at times staying for relatively protracted intervals, and the men of the family in general were mobile as far as attending to business required. John was nominated Third Warden of the Skinners' Company in June 1630 but turned down the position without incurring the usual fine on account of his secluded lifestyle. A fleeting effort at resuscitating the Virginia Company in 1631 saw both brothers appointed to an advisory commission as experts.¹⁶ Nicholas mentioned attending a meeting of the Somers Islands court that June in a letter to his mother, which was probably linked to the Virginia plans, though little other indication exists of his or John's presence at any of the London meetings associated with the bid.¹⁷ Even the women of the family had some opportunity to travel. Susanna Collet visited her daughter Su Mapletoft at home in Essex, as did Su's Little Gidding sisters, often staying for a while when she was due to deliver a baby.

Another aspect of the Ferrars' past that they deemed worth owning was their religious commitment, however unexceptional it may have been. By highlighting the legacy of his parents' piety John Ferrar gave depth to the Christian character of the family. To this end he chronicled his father's friendship with the "grave, learned Bishop Francis White",

¹⁵ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.60.

¹⁶ D.R. Ransome, "John Ferrar", p.22.

¹⁷ Nicholas Ferrar to Mary Ferrar, 8 Jun 1631, FP, r4, 792[421-2].

who, by Ferrar's initiative, was installed as lecturer in their London parish. He also wrote of his mother's great holiness, such that she was moved to hear "as it was computed, in her lifetime twelve thousand sermons (for she was also addicted that way)", a very mercantile measurement of a spiritual quality.¹⁸

In spite of their retired, religious lifestyle and the imperative to sever ties with the past and with the sphere beyond Little Gidding, then, the Ferrars' continued to identify through their heritage and their secular associations. Doing so amounted to an illusion of permanence, and the continued assertion of models of manhood within their matriarchal household, though in reality in the space of only three generations the Ferrar line progressed, according to the attainments of its menfolk, from Nicholas Ferrar sen.'s origins as an artisan in Hertford, through his success as a London merchant trading overseas, married to a gentlewoman and with sons at law and in enterprise, to minor provincial landowners and clerics.

The acclamation of Mary Ferrar as the matriarch of the generations gathered at Little Gidding was not only a token of proper respect but also an appeal to her established, gentle heritage, in an effort to nurture the impression of permanence. The first sentence of the *Life* reads: "Nicholas Ferrar's mother was of the ancient Cheshire family of the Woodnoths of Shavinton, where her ancestors had enjoyed that lordship upon five hundred years, from father to son, and allied to most of the gentry in that county."¹⁹ Her significant presence in family documents is not simply because she lived at Little Gidding until her death in 1634, but also because it was her landowning heritage that corresponded with her family's new situation, as opposed to the urban, commercial context of her late husband's success. The interest is reflected in one of John Ferrar's letters to his mother, encouraging her to take care of her health as a duty of love to her children. He described her as both the head and "the Bond and Simont [cement] to hould the whole Body of our Family United not only in Cohabitation but in Harts".²⁰

Notwithstanding the Ferrars' efforts to create a sense of their family's long and solid history, the religious community at Little Gidding did not outlast the lifespan of its original members. It ebbed slowly in the wake of Nicholas Ferrar's death in 1637 and was defunct when his brother John and sister Susanna Collet died twenty years later. Neither is there any evidence to suggest that the establishment itself was designed to be permanent. The young women who lived there, for example, needed to "be fully accomplished, even with civility, for worldly employment when God called them and their minds to it".²¹ After

¹⁸ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, pp.41-2.

¹⁹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.41.

²⁰ John Ferrar to Mary Ferrar, 20 & 26 Feb 1619, FP, r4, 665[102-5].

²¹ Ferrar, *Life* in Muir & White, *Materials*, p.86.

all, it was the household of a family, not an institution or a sect, and family members lived on, the way of life at Little Gidding adapting to its changing inhabitants and their needs. It was a pious household, with concerns typical of other godly households. Barring the curious unmarried younger son and his celibate niece who formed a quasi-marital couple as household heads, it was organised in keeping with conventional hierarchical principles, according to gender, marital status and age.

And whereas, being Protestants, godliness was not incompatible with practising worldly occupations and accumulating capital, the Ferrars chose not to emphasise those aspects of life. But without having independent resources, or the material support of an institution for their contemplative lifestyle that Catholic communities had, they effectively carried on as other families did: making provision for their many children who would live in the world, not in retirement, and the majority not at Little Gidding. In this perspective, the ambiguities surrounding their philosophy and their actual way of living were expedient. Both money and religion were enabling forces, and the Ferrars were able to pursue their Christian ideal of simplicity with the assurance that according to confessional custom they were permitted and indeed charged with the responsibility to work on their own financial security. The transience of the Little Gidding vision, lamented with resignation in various commentaries since and generally attributed to the community's reliance upon its genius, Nicholas Ferrar, was a likelihood that was, in all probability, quite real to the Ferrars, even as they persisted with the experiment.²² Moreover, as this thesis has demonstrated, the degree to which that vision was shared by members of the household other than Nicholas and John Ferrar and Mary Collet, as opposed to imposed upon them, is questionable. Given John was responsible for constructing the only existing account of the ordered way of life at Little Gidding, it is also possible to challenge the notion that Nicholas had a clear plan for his family there, or at least to question how structured that lifestyle (and Nicholas's conception of it) really was.

The single greatest change associated with the Ferrars' move to Little Gidding was the progression towards identifying as a clerical family. Members of the Mapletoft and Woodnoth families who belonged to the generation equivalent to Nicholas Ferrar's were already clergymen, but Nicholas became a deacon only days before his family returned from London to Huntingdonshire permanently. Whilst he did not become a priest, every one of the Collet sisters who was married from Little Gidding took a minister as her husband. Their youngest brother, Ferrar Collet, was ordained at Lincoln in 1661, and

²² "Nevertheless, like many other experiments in Christian living, Nicholas Ferrar created something which could not be replicated. Perhaps unknown to him, its character depended too much upon his individual vision and the proximity of his presence." Muir & White, *Materials*, p.31.

served as rector of Little Gidding from 1659 to 1663.²³ John Ferrar's grandson, Thomas, was the first bearer of the Ferrar name to be ordained a priest, also at Lincoln, in 1687, and he too was a rector of Little Gidding.²⁴ Careers in the Church to which they belonged and marriage with its ministers were likely attractive, economical means of securing the futures of the many young people in the Ferrar household, a family strategy that provided employment and the promise of devout family lives in harmony with the values by which they had been raised at Little Gidding.

The discovery of the Ferrars' complex and variable identity contributes to historiography concerning the gentry and early modern English families in general. By virtue of their links to the gentle Woodnoth family and John Ferrar's assertions concerning his father, a merchant but a "gentleman" nonetheless, in the *Life*, the Ferrars fit under the headings of both mercantile and gentry families.²⁵

Given the variety of sources of affiliation available to the Ferrars, it follows that their familial identity was malleable and complex, just, one might infer, as was that of many other early modern families. The Ferrars were entrenched in London's merchant community, and partners in the important colonial business of the Virginia Company. They were rooted in their religious confession via an indistinct relation to their namesake Marian bishop-martyr, Robert Ferrar; espoused to the Caroline divines by the Collet daughters' marriages; and chaste servants of God committed to lives of prayer. Scions of the landed gentry through their matriarch, Mary Woodnoth Ferrar, described by a nephew as the last surviving branch of "that beloved Tree, from which my own Lyfe hath budded",²⁶ they were loyal subjects of the Crown, and nonetheless attorneys-at-law and representatives of the English commonalty in parliament. Additional variations at the level of individuals depended on factors including age and gender. And outside Little Gidding were persons not embraced by the communal ethos and largely forgotten owing to exclusion from the historical record. Richard Ferrar was a gambler incarcerated for his debts, leaving his wife Elizabeth, with an infant to care for, poor and powerless in London. Edward Collet, young and rebellious, breached the terms of his apprenticeship and was shipped to India to mend his ways. Even within the household there were marginal individuals: Bathsheba, married to John Ferrar, and terribly unhappy; Joyce Collet, who dreamt of serving a gentlewoman

²³ J. & J.A. Venn, *Alum. Cantab.*, 1, I, p.371.

²⁴ J. & J.A. Venn, *Alum. Cantab.*, 1, II, p.134.

²⁵ Grassby has claimed that work on the families that constituted the "urban business community" is lacking, as opposed to the landed families whose lives have been better reconstructed through the attention of social historians. "Love, Property and Kinship", p.335.

²⁶ John Woodnoth to Mary Ferrar, 3 Feb 1629, FP, r4, 662[96].

instead of living at prayer with her family until a parson was found for her to marry;²⁷ and the silent and shadowy children who are only glimpsed in the documents.

It is clear that a range of claims to identity was available to the Ferrars, regardless of whether or not it was possible, or desirable, to reconcile them all satisfactorily. Social, financial, spiritual and personal concerns were contradictory but constantly interconnected, or made compatible. Determining the identity of the Ferrar family was, to a significant degree, a matter of emphasis, and choice according to exigency. Like many other lesser gentle families whose stories have received less historical attention than their wealthier counterparts, they were at once aspirational and forced to engage a range of socio-economic strategies to get by. Such pragmatism was embodied, for example, in Nicholas Ferrar sen.'s decision to prepare his sons for different careers, John and Richard training for business, and Erasmus, William and Nicholas given the university education of gentlemen and the first two set to work at law. The Ferrars of Little Gidding valued the preservation of a continuous, harmonious religious identity, yet it was difficult to maintain in practice when it was equally expedient for them to foster connections on other, worldlier fronts. Historians have reproduced the unified image of the family that John Ferrar wanted to be remembered, but theirs is a case for diversifying historical notions of familial identity. The intriguing complexity of the Ferrars' identity only becomes clear when they are studied in their early seventeenth-century context, rather than through John's carefully constructed narrative in the *Life* upon which the predominantly Anglican historiographical tradition has rested.

²⁷ Williams, *Conversations*, pp.136-7.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A Little Academy Characters

Participants' ages in 1631, the year the Little Academy was founded, are listed.

“The Foure Mayden Sisters”

<i>The Cheife</i> [later <i>The Mother</i>]	Mary Collet, 30
<i>The Patient</i>	Anna Collet, 28
<i>The Cheerefull</i>	Hester Collet, 24
<i>The Affectionate</i>	Margaret Collet, 23 ^a

Other sisters

<i>The Obedient</i>	Elizabeth Collet, 19
<i>The Submisse</i>	Joyce Collet, 16
<i>The Goodwife</i> [later <i>The Well-married</i>]	Susanna Mapletoft, 29 ^b
<i>The Humble</i>	Mary Mapletoft, 3 ^c

Supervisors

<i>The Founder/Mother</i>	Mrs Mary Ferrar, 77 ^d
<i>The Guardian</i>	John Ferrar, 43
<i>The Visitour</i>	Nicholas Ferrar, 38
<i>The Moderatour</i>	Susanna Collet (née Ferrar), 50
<i>The Resolved</i>	John Collet, 53 ^e

Notes

- a. It is unclear from the records which sisters were the Cheerefull and the Affectionate. As noted above, Sharland and Blackstone suggest Margaret and Elizabeth, but are not sure who took which role. Williams makes Hester the Cheerefull and Margaret the Affectionate; his conclusion is followed here, as Elizabeth was probably younger than the others.²⁸
- b. The Good Wife is a non-participant character seldom mentioned in the dialogues. The role was probably created for Susanna Mapletoft, the second-eldest of the Collet sisters, who lived with her husband Joshua and their children in Margaretting, Essex. She received frequent letters from the family at Little Gidding and, in line with old Mrs Ferrar's bidding, was sent the first volume of the Academy's proceedings on the anniversary of its foundation.²⁹
- c. Mary (Mall) was the first child of Susanna (née Collet) and Joshua Mapletoft. As a small child she came to live at Little Gidding where her aunt Mary Collet took charge of her. Mall entered the Little Academy on 1 November 1632 as the Humble, the seventh of the virtual "daughters" Mary Collet attained that day when she was installed as the new Mother of the Academy.³⁰ Sharland (p.xliv) calls Nan the "seventh child of Mrs. Joshua Mapletoft (née Susanna Collet)"; this is incorrect, as Susanna and Joshua Mapletoft had married in 1628 and by November 1632 had three children: Nan (Ann, the daughter born of Joshua Mapletoft's first marriage), Mall (b. August 1629) and John (b. 15 June 1631), a second son, Samuel (b.1632) having died an infant earlier that year. The Humble was only three years old and her membership of the Academy was symbolic.
- d. There is no record of Mrs Ferrar's character actually participating in the dialogues, though she was probably an observer. She stood down as Mother on St Luke's Day (18 October) 1632. Mary Collet was installed in her place on All Saints' Day (1 November) 1632, taking on the title of Mother. She continued to play a dominant part in the dialogues under her new name.
- e. John Collet, the Resolved, "who in the want of Roome at first gave way to others for the better Exercize of their Vertues" during the storying sessions, is listed as committing himself to the group at the beginning of "The Winding Sheet" and figures in the discussion "On the Retirement of Charles V".³¹

²⁸ Williams, *Conversations*, p.xxxii.

²⁹ See the letters of 2 Feb 1632 in Sharland, *Story Books*, pp.liii-liv.

³⁰ All Saints' 1632, Sharland, *Story Books*, pp.181-2.

³¹ "The Winding Sheet" (preamble) in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, p.110. "On the Retirement of Charles V" in Williams, *Conversations*, pp.1-156.

In the Name of God Amen

My most deare and Honored Father

That I may not adde to your trouble I hold it needles either to Repeate what I formerly desyered or to Expostelate the Cause which hinders me in the procecution of them which if not deceived in my owne hearte were and are still at present my Earnest wishes – But I rest one God and you my deare father for the accomplishment of them when & how he pleaseth

Now my Honored Father I Understand you are pleased to desyer to know how I am affected & desier touching my Estate of life. how or what measuer of this worlds Prosperity I desyer to receive of God, my owne Unworthyness and ignorance makes mee fearefull to adventuer one the choyce and doutefull to attayne. Yet may I not refuse to Aunswer being called to by God for so I esteeme it from and by you

Wherefore craving his assistance I humbly tender them unto your fatherly handes

Touching my Condission of lyfe such Contente doe I now fynde I humbly praise God that I neither wish or desyer any Change of it But humbly bedge of God yf he soe please to see it good and with my Parence leave to give me grace and strenght that I may spend the remayn[d]er of my dayes without greater incoumbrances of this world which doe of Necessaty accompany a married Estate

But I dare not trust my owne Judgment in this waity matter, but first beesech you deare father to let me know your Oppinion of it and Councell according to that faythfull love & promise which you gave me the assurance of you would doe – And as God shall direct you soe let me I beesech you obtayne your helpe and derection herein –

For my desiers of Riches and Prosperity I acknowledge it yf God soe please such a portion as to be helpfull to others I desyer

Thus my Honored father I have ben bold to declare my wishes and desyers But may not say they are as they ought to be, nor yet are soe Unmoveable but your wisdomm and Conciense shall shall [*sic*] by gods grace be my Ruler and guid and your Councell my Warrent to enterprize or forbear any desyers of myne herein Wherefor I once agayne humbly Crave your helpe and prayers for mee For which you shall for ever binde me in the high[t] of love & Duty – I humbly rest

Your most obleidge[d] Daughter

ANNA COLLETT

[Endorsement by Nicholas Ferrar]

This inclosed Declaration Anna delivered her sister Mary to give mee on Saterdag the 22 Octob – but I willed her to keepe it by her till this present 23 in the Afternoone when I reade it in Marys presence But without any speech at all therabouts onely I willed her and that not by word but by writing to shew them to her grandmother and Unkle farrer and to noe body else

³² Anna Collet to Nicholas Ferrar, 22 Sep 1631, FP, r4, 809[471-2], reproduced in Blackstone, *Ferrar Papers*, pp.264-6.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Reference works and bibliographies
2. Manuscripts
3. Printed primary sources
4. Secondary sources
5. Unpublished theses

1. Reference works and bibliographies

- Abstracts of Dissertations Approved for the Ph.D., M.Sc. and M.Litt. Degrees in the University of Cambridge during the academical year 1935-6.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937.
- Index of Inquisitions preserved in the Public Record Office.* Vol. 4. New York: Krauss Reprint Co., 1963. (London: Her Britannic Majesty's Stationery Office, 1898-1912)
- Davies, Godfrey, et al. *Bibliography of British History: Stuart Period, 1603-1714.* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.
- Mullins, E.L.C. *Texts and calendars: an analytical guide to serial publications.* London: Royal Historical Society, 1958.
- Mullins, E.L.C. *Texts and calendars II: an analytical guide to serial publications, 1957-1982.* London: Royal Historical Society, 1983.
- Matthew, H.C.G. and Harrison, Brian (eds). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [online edition]. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>
- Peterson, William S. "Bibliography: Nicholas Ferrar and Little Gidding." *English Literature and Religion* [online]. <http://www.inform.umd.edu/ENGL/englfac/Wpeterson/ELR/bibliographies/>
- Polak, Emil J. *Medieval and Renaissance Letter Treatises and Form Letters: A Census of Manuscripts Found in Part of Western Europe, Japan, and the United States of America.* Leiden: Brill, 1994.
- Polak, Emil J. *Medieval and Renaissance Letter Treatises and Form Letters. A Census of Manuscripts Found in Eastern Europe and the Former U.S.S.R.* Leiden: Brill, 1993.
- Royal Historical Society Bibliography [online]. <http://www.rhs.ac.uk/bibl/>
- Sturgess, H.A.C. (comp.) *Register of Admissions to the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, from the fifteenth century to the year 1944.* Vol. 1. London: Butterworth and Company, 1949.
- Venn, J. and J.A. (comp.) *Alumni cantabrigienses: a biographical list of all known students, graduates and holders of office at the University of Cambridge, from the earliest times to 1900.* Part 1, Vols 1-4. Cambridge: University Press, 1922-54.

2. Manuscripts

Bodleian Library, Oxford

MS Rawlinson D.2. Manuscript of John Ferrar's *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*.

MS Top. Hunts. e.1. Letters of Susanna Collet.

British Library, London

MSS Add. 34657-9, Little Gidding "Story Books" (dialogues of the Little Academy).

MS C.23.e.4. *Actions and Doctrine and other Passages touching our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...*
(Little Gidding gospel concordance made for Charles I, 1636).

MS Harley 4845. Edward Lenton, letter to Sir Thomas Hetley, c.1633-34.

MS Royal Appendix 65. Concordance of the Old Testament books of Kings and Chronicles made at Little Gidding for Charles I, 1640.

Cambridge University Library

MS Add. 4484 ("Almack"). Miscellaneous prayers of Nicholas Ferrar, and fragment of John Ferrar's *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*.

MS Mm.i.46 ("Baker"), vol.35, Baker MSS. Manuscript copy of John Ferrar's *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*.

Clare College Library, Cambridge

MS Mill Hill 9527. Francis Peck, collection for the history of the nunnery of Little Gidding.

County Record Office, Cambridge

Bourn Parish Register

County Record Office, Huntingdon

Little Gidding Parish Register and Bishop's Transcript

Steeple Gidding Parish Register and Bishop's Transcript

Dean and Chapter Library, Durham

MS Hunter, fo 132. Letter of John Ferrar to Dr Isaac Basire, 1653.

Dr Williams's Library, London

MS Jones B.87 ("Jones"). Manuscript of John Ferrar's *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*.

Lambeth Palace Library, London

MS 251 ("Lambeth"). John Ferrar's account of the making of the royal concordances.

Madgalene College Library, Cambridge

Ferrar MSS. [includes Ferrar MSS, Box 14, Item 28, "Magdalene", manuscript copy of John Ferrar's *Life of Nicholas Ferrar*].

Published as: Ransome, David R. (ed. and intro.) *The Ferrar Papers, 1590-1790 in Magdalene College, Cambridge*. East Ardsley, Wakefield, West Yorkshire: Microform Academic Publishers, 1992. Microfilm: 12 reels / CD-ROM: 10 discs. Includes "Introduction/Finding List."

Museum of London Library, London

MS Tangye 46. 78/675. John Ferrar's account of Charles I's visit to Little Gidding in 1642.

National Archives, London

C 142, CHANCERY, INQUISITIONS POST MORTEM, SERIES II

Inquisition post mortem, Nicholas Farrar, Clerk of Little Gidding, 26 June 1638, C142/568/117.

PROB 11, RECORDS OF THE PREROGATIVE COURT OF CANTERBURY

Will of Humphrey Collet or Colett, Bowyer of London, prob. 27 January 1567, Stonard Register, PROB 11/49.

Will of Mary Collet alias Farrer of Little Gidding, Hunts, dat. 7 October 1680, prob. 11 November 1680, Bath Quire nos 124-185, prob. 11 November 1680, PROB 11/364.

Will of Marie Farrar, widow, dat. 29 July 1628, prob. 12 July 1634, Seager Quire nos 65-144, PROB 11/166.

Will of Nicholas Farrar, Skinner of London, dat. 23 March 1620, prob. 4 April 1620, Soame Quire nos 1-64, PROB 11/135.

Will of Josuah Mapletofte, Clerk of Margaretting, Essex, prob. 30 September 1635, Sadler Quire nos 93-152, PROB 11/169.

Will of Arthur Woodneth or Woodnoth, Goldsmith of London, dat. 18 February 1645, Rivers Quire nos 1-56, prob. 17 March 1645, PROB 11/192.

Oxfordshire Record Office, Oxford

Annesley MSS, E6/12/13D/1-25. Manor of Little Gidding, 10 June 1592 – [c.1766].

Sheffield University Library, Sheffield

Hartlib MSS. The papers of Samuel Hartlib. University of Sheffield, Sheffield.

Published as: *The Hartlib papers: a complete text and image database of the papers of Samuel Hartlib (c.1600-1662) held in Sheffield University Library, Sheffield, England*. Second edn. Sheffield: hriOnline, University of Sheffield, 2002.

3. Printed Primary Sources

Anon. *The Arminian Nunnery*. London: printed for Thomas Underhill, 1641.

Ashe, Simeon. *Gray Hayres Crowned with Grace, a sermon preached ...at the funerall of that Revd, eminently learned and faithful minister of Jesus Christ, Mr. Thomas Gataker*. London, 1654.

[Astell, Mary.] *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies, for the advancement of their true and greatest interest by a lover of her sex*. London: printed for R. Wilkins, 1694.

Bayly, Lewis. *The Practise of Pietie directing a Christian how to walke that he may please God...* London: 1611.

Blackstone, B. (ed.) *The Ferrar Papers: containing a life of Nicholas Ferrar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938.

Brathwait, Richard. *The English gentlewoman...* London: B. Alsop and T. Fawcet, 1631.

Brinsley, John. *Ludus Literarius: or, The grammar schoole ...* London: [printed by Humphrey Lownes] for Thomas Man, 1612.

Bruce, John (ed.) *Letters and Papers of the Verney Family Down to the End of the Year 1639*. Works of the Camden Society, no. 56 (1853). New York: Johnson Reprint, 1968.

- Byrne, Muriel St Clare. *The Lisle Letters*. 6 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Carbone, Ludovico. *Introductio ad Catechismum, sive Doctrinam Christianam*. Venice: at the sign of the lion, 1596.
- Charles I, King. *A proclamation for a generall fast to be weekly observed thorowout the realme of England*. London: Robert Barker and the assignees of John Bill [printers to the King], 1636.
- Church of England. *A forme of common prayer, together with an order of fasting: for the averting of Gods heavy visitation upon many places of this kingdome, and for the drawing downe of his blessings upon us...* London: Bonham Norton and John Bill [printers to the King], 1625.
- Clarke, Samuel. *The lives of sundry eminent persons in this later age in two parts...* London: printed for Thomas Simmons, 1683.
- Clarke, Samuel. *The marrow of ecclesiastical historie, contained in the lives of the fathers, and other learned men, and famous divines...* London: printed by William Du-gard, 1650.
- Cornaro, Luigi. *Discorsi della Vita Sobria*. Padua, 1558-65.
- Cosin, John. *The Correspondence of John Cosin, D.D., Lord Bishop of Durham*. 2 vols. Ed. Ornsby, G. Durham: Surtees Society, 52, 55, 1868-72.
- Cowley, Abraham. "On the death of Mr Crashaw" in his *Poems*. London: H. Moseley, 1656.
- Davis, Norman (ed.) *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Early English Texts Society, 2004.
- Day, Angel. *The English secretorie, Wherin is containyed, a perfect method, for the inditing of all manner of epistles and familiar letters...* London: Robert Walde-grave, 1586.
- D'Ewes, Sir Simonds. *The Autobiography and correspondence of Sir Simonds D'Ewes during the Reigns of James I and Charles I*. 2 vols. Ed. Halliwell, J.O. London: Richard Bentley, 1845.
- Downham, George. *The Christians sanctuarie*. London: Adam Islip, 1604.
- Drake, Judith. *An essay in defence of the female sex*. London: printed for A. Roper and E. Wilkinson, 1696.
- Du Bosque, Jacques. *The secretary of ladies*. London: Tho. Cotes, 1638.
- Eliot, T.S. *Four Quartets*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1943 / London: Faber and Faber, 1944.
- Eliot, T.S. *Little Gidding*. London: Faber and Faber, 1942.
- Erasmus, Desiderius. *Libellus de conscribendis epistolis*. Cambridge: printed for John Siberch, 1521.
- Ferrar, John. "Life of Nicholas Ferrar", c.1655 in Muir, Lynette R., and White, John A. (eds). *Materials for the Life of Nicholas Ferrar: A Reconstruction of John Ferrar's Account of His Brother's Life Based on All the Surviving Copies*. Leeds: Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, 1996.
- [Ferrar, John.] *A perfect description of Virginia: being, a full and true relation of the present state of the plantation, their health, peace, and plenty...* London: print [sic] for Richard Wodenoth, 1649 (i.e. 1648).
- Ferrar, Nicholas. "The parliamentary papers of Nicholas Ferrar." Ed. Ransome, David R. in *Seventeenth-century Political and Financial Papers*. Camden Miscellany XXXIII. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Royal Historical Society, 1996.
- Ferrar, Nicholas. *Sir Thomas Smith's Misgovernment of the Virginia Company: a manuscript from the Devonshire papers at Chatsworth House*. Ed. and intro. Ransome, David R. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Roxburghe Club, 1990.
- Firth, C.H. and Rait, R.S. (eds). *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*. 3 vols. London: Stationery Office, 1911. Online version: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.asp?pubid=606/>.
- Fleming, Abraham. *A Panoplie of Epistles, or, a looking glass for the unlearned ...* London: printed [by H. Middleton] for Ralph Newberie, 1576.
- Foxe, John. *Acts and Monuments [...]* (1583 edition) [online]. Sheffield: hriOnline,

<http://www.hrionline.shef.ac.uk/foxe/>

- Fuller, Thomas. *The History of the Worthies of England*. 3 vols. ed. Nuttall, P. Austin. London: Thomas Tegg, 1840.
- Gouge, William. *Of Domesticall Duties*. London, 1622.
- Hacket, John. *Scrinia Reserata: a memorial offered to the great deservings of J. Williams...* London: E. Jones for S. Lowndes, 1639.
- Hearne, Thomas (ed.) *Thomæ Caii ... Vindiciæ antiquitatis Academiae Oxoniensis contra Joannem Caium, Cantabrigiensem ... & reliquias quasdam, ad familiam religiosissimam Ferrariorum, de Gidding Parva in agro Huntingdoniensi, pertinentes, subnexuit*. 2 vols. Oxford: Sheldonian Theatre, 1730.
- Herbert, George. *The Country Parson, The Temple*. Ed. and intro Wall, John N. New York: Paulist Press, 1981.
- Herbert, George. *The Remains of that Sweet Singer of the Temple, George Herbert*. 2 vols. London: Pickering, 1836-38.
- Herbert, George. *A priest to the temple, or, The countrey parson his character, and rule of holy life by Mr. Geo. Herbert...* Ed. Oley, Barnabas. London: T. Roycroft for Benjamin Tooke, 1671.
- Herbert, George. *Herbert's remains, or, sundry pieces of that sweet singer of the temple, Mr George Herbert ...* London: printed for Timothy Garthwait, 1652.
- Herbert, George. *The Temple: Sacred poems and private ejaculations*. Cambridge: T. Buck and R. Daniel, 1633.
- Hildersam, Arthur. *The doctrine of fasting and praier, and humiliation for sinne*. London: George Miller, 1633.
- Holland, Henry. *The Christian exercise of fasting, private and publike*. London: the widow Orwin, 1596.
- Holles, Gervase. *Memorials of the Holles Family 1493-1656*. Ed. Wood, A.C. London: Camden Society, Third series, Vol. 55, 1937 [1658].
- Hoby, Margaret. *The private life of an Elizabethan lady: the diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605*. Ed. Moody, J. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1998.
- Hooker, Richard. *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Politie*. 8 vols. London, 1593-1648.
- Howell, James. *Epistolæ Ho-Eliaenæ. Familiar letters domestic and forren...* London: printed for Humphrey Moseley, 1645.
- Ingelo, Nathaniel. *Bentivolio and Urania in four bookes*. London: J.G. for Richard Marriott, 1660.
- Ingelo, Nathaniel. *Bentivolio and Urania, the second part, in two bookes*. London: J. Grismond for Richard Marriott, 1664.
- Jackson, Thomas. *The works of the reverend and learned divine, Thomas Jackson, sometime president of Corpus Christi College in Oxon such as were, and such as never before were printed in three volumes...* Comp. Oley, Barnabas. London: Andrew Clark, 1673.
- Jackson, Thomas. *Maran atha: or Dominus veniet. Commentaries upon the articles of the Creed never heretofore printed... by Thomas Jackson...* Comp. Oley, Barnabas. London: A. Maxey for Timothy Garthwait, 1657.
- Jackson, Thomas. *An exact collection of the works of Doctor Jackson ... such as were not published before...* London: R. Norton for Timothy Garthwait, 1654.
- Jackson, Thomas. *A collection of the works of that holy man and profound divine, Thomas Jackson...* Comp. Oley, Barnabas. London: R. Norton for Timothy Garthwait, 1653.
- Kingsford, Charles Lethbridge (ed.) *The Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290-1483*. London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1919.
- Lessius, Leonardus. *Hygiasticon: or, the right course of preserving Life and Health unto extream old Age...* Trans. Ferrar, Nicholas. Cambridge: Roger Daniel, 1634.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works*. Vol. 51. Lehmann, Helmut T. and Pelikan, Yaroslav (eds). St Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia Publishing and Fortress Press, 1958.

- [Macdonough, Terence Michael.] *Brief Memoirs of Nicholas Ferrar, founder of a Protestant religious establishment at Little Gidding, Huntingdonshire, collected from a narrative by Dr Turner*. Bristol: J. Chilcott, 1829.
- Mason, Henry. *Christian humiliation, or, A treatise of fasting*. London: G.P. [George Purslowe], 1625.
- [Makin, Bathsua.] *An essay to revive the antient education of gentlewomen in religion, manners, arts and tongues...* London: printed by J.D. to be sold by Thos. Parkhurst, 1673.
- Mayor, J. E. B. (ed.) "Letters of Archbishop Williams ... with materials for his life". *Cambridge Antiquarian Communications: Being Papers Presented at Meetings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, 2 (1864) and 3 (1879).
- Mayor, J. E. B. (ed.) "Original letters of Godfrey Goodman together with materials for his life". *Cambridge Antiquarian Communications* 2 (1864).
- Mayor, J. E. B. (ed.) *The Life of Matthew Robinson*. Cambridge, 1856.
- Mayor, J. E. B. (ed.) *Nicholas Ferrar: Two Lives by His Brother John and by Doctor Jebb*. Cambridge in the Seventeenth Century, Part 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1855.
- Montagu, Richard. *A gagg for the new Gospell? No: a new gagg for an old goose...* London: Thomas Snodham, 1624.
- More, P.E. and Cross, F. L. (eds). *Anglicanism: The Thought and Practice of the Church of England Illustrated from the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*. London: SPCK; Milwaukee, 1935.
- Muir, Lynette R. and White, John A. (eds and intro.) *Materials for the Life of Nicholas Ferrar: A Reconstruction of John Ferrar's Account of His Brother's Life Based on All the Surviving Copies*. Leeds: Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, 1996.
- Palmes, William. *Life of Mrs Dorothy Lawson of St Antony's near Newcastle-upon-Tyne in Northumberland*, ed. G. Bouchier Richardson. Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1851.
- Peckard, Peter. *Memoirs of the Life of Mr. Nicholas Ferrar*. Cambridge: J. Archdeacon for J. and J. Merrill, 1790.
- Peckard, Peter. Am I not a man? and a brother? With all humility addressed to the British legislature. Cambridge: J. Archdeacon, 1788.
- Peckard, Peter. *Justice and mercy recommended, particularly with reference to the slave trade. A sermon preached before the University of Cambridge*. Cambridge: J. Archdeacon, 1788.
- [Peckard, Peter.] *Subscription. Or historical extracts. Humbly inscribed to the Right Revd the Bishops: and, to the petitioners; shewing the impropriety of their petition*. London: W. Hay, 1776.
- Prynne, William. *Histrio-Mastix: The Player's Scourge; or, Actor's Tragedy*. London: printed for Michael Sparke, 1633 [i.e. 1632].
- Searle, Arthur. *Barrington Family Letters 1628-1632*. London: Royal Historical Society, 1983.
- Sharland, Emily Cruwys (ed. and intro.) *The Story Books of Little Gidding*. London: Seeley, 1899.
- Shelford, Robert. *Five Learned and Pious Discourses*. Cambridge: [Thomas Buck and Roger Daniel,] printers to the University, 1635.
- Staley, Vernon (ed. and rev.) *Hierurgia Anglicana: Documents and Extracts Illustrative of the Ceremonial of the Anglican Church after the Reformation*. 3 vols. New edn. London: De La More Press, 1902-5 (1848).
- Stubbes, Phillip. *A Christal Glasse for Christian Women. Containing a most excellent discourse of the godly life and Christian death of Mistris Katherine Stubbes*. London, 1591.
- Taylor, Jeremy. *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and of Holy Dying* [1650]. Rev. Eden, C.P. New edn. London: Longman, Green, et al., 1859.
- Taylor, John. *The needles excellency*. Tenth edn. London: printed for James Boler, 1634.
- Thorndike, Herbert. *Theological Works of Herbert Thorndike*, Vol. I, part 1. Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology. Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844.
- Turner, Francis. "Life of Nicholas Ferrar." *Christian Magazine* 2 (1761).
- Valdés, Juan de. *The hundred and ten Considerations of Signior John Valdesso*. Trans. Ferrar,

- Nicholas with notes by George Herbert. Oxford: Leonard Lichfield, 1638.
- Virginia Company Archives: The Ferrar Papers, 1590-1790, from Magdalene College, Cambridge.* Marlborough, Wiltshire: Adam Matthew Digital, forthcoming (2007).
<http://www.amdigital.co.uk/collections/Virginia-Company-Archives/default.aspx/>.
- Vives, Juan Luis. *De conscribendis epistolis*. 1536.
- Vives, Juan Luis. *The Instruction of A Christen Woman*, trans. Hyrde, Richard. London, 1529. (*De Institutione Foeminae Christianae*, 1524) Available online from the University of Illinois Press at <http://www.press.uillinois.edu/epub/books/vives/toc.html/>.
- Walton, Izaak. *The lives of John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert, Robert Sanders*. [1640-1678]. London: Oxford University Press, 1956.
- White, Richard. *Celestial Fire: A Book of Meditations on the Veni, Sancte Spiritus, Written in the Seventeenth Century by Richard White*. Re-ed. Green, E.M. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1913.
- White, Robert. *Cupid's Banishment: A Masque Presented to Her Majesty by the Young Gentlewomen of the Ladies Hall, Deptford, May 4, 1617*. Ed. and intro. McGee, C.E. *Renaissance Drama*, new series, 19 (1988), pp.227-64.
- Williams, A. M. (ed. and intro.) *Conversations at Little Gidding. 'On the Retirement of Charles V.'* *'On the Austere Life.'* *Dialogues by Members of the Ferrar Family*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- Woodnoth, Arthur. *A Short Collection of the Most Remarkable Passages from the originall to the dissolution of the Virginia Company*. London: Richard Cates for Edward Husband, 1651.
- Worthington, John. *The Diary and Correspondence of Dr. John Worthington*. Vol. 2, part II. Ed. Christie, R. Copley. Manchester: printed for the Chetham Society, 1886.

4. Secondary Sources

- Acland, J. E. *Little Gidding and Its Inmates in the Time of Charles I, with an Account of the Harmonies Designed and Constructed by Nicholas Ferrar*. London: SPCK, 1903.
- Addleshaw, G.W.O. *The High Church Tradition: a study in the liturgical thought of the seventeenth century*. London: Faber, 1941.
- Allchin, A.M. "Anglican Spirituality" in S. W. Sykes and J. E. Booty (eds). *The Study of Anglicanism*. London and Philadelphia: SPCK/Fortress Press, 1988, pp.313-25.
- Altman, Janet Gurkin. "Women's Letters in the Public Sphere" in Goldsmith, Elizabeth C. and Goodman, Dena. *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995, pp.99-115.
- Amussen, Susan. *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England*. New York: Columbia, 1988.
- Anderson, Judith H. *Biographical Truth: The Representation of Historical Persons in Tudor-Stuart Writing*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984.
- Andrews, H.C. "The Ferrar family of Hertford, London, and Little Gidding." *Transactions of the East Hertfordshire Archaeological Society* 11:4 (1945 for 1943-4), pp.269-78.
- Anon. "Nicholas Ferrar, Little Gidding, and the Bookbinding by the Nuns". *Bookworm* 3 (November 1890), p.366.
- Arnott, Felix R. "Anglicanism in the seventeenth century" in More, P.E. and Cross, F.L. (eds). *Anglicanism: The Thought and Practice of the Church of England Illustrated from the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*. London: SPCK; Milwaukee, 1935.
- Aston, Margaret. "Segregation in Church" in Sheils, W.J. and Wood, D. (eds). *Studies in*

- Church History 27: Women in the Church*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp.237-94.
- Avis, Paul D.L. *Anglicanism and the Christian Church: Theological Resources in Historical Perspective*. Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1989.
- Avis, Paul D.L. "What is 'Anglicanism'?" in S. W. Sykes and J. E. Booty (eds). *The Study of Anglicanism*. London and Philadelphia: SPCK/Fortress Press, 1988, pp.405-24.
- Barber, Richard (ed.) *The Pastons: A Family in the Wars of the Roses*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1993.
- Barbour, Reid. *Literature and Religious Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Barbour, Reid. "The Caroline Church Heroic: The Reconstruction of Epic Religion in Three Seventeenth-Century Communities." *Renaissance Quarterly* 50 (Autumn 1997), pp.771-818.
- Barnaby, Junior [pseud. of Thomas James]. *Journey to Little Gidding*. Langley, 1856.
- Barnes, A.W. "Editing George Herbert's Ejaculations." *Textual Cultures* 1:2 (2006), pp.90-113.
- Barton, David and Hall, Nigel (eds). *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1999.
- Beachcroft, T. O. "Nicholas Ferrar and George Herbert." *Criterion* 12 (October 1932), pp.24-42.
- Beale, P. O. *A History of the Post in England from the Romans to the Stuarts*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998.
- Ben-Amos, Ilana Krausman. "Gifts and Favors: Informal Support in Early Modern England". *Journal of Modern History* 72 (June 2000), pp.295-338.
- Ben-Amos, Ilana Krausman. *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.
- Bennett, Judith and Froide, Amy (eds). *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- Bigmore, Peter. *The Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire Landscape*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1979.
- Bindley, T. H. "At Little Gidding." *Macmillan's Magazine* 56 (1887), p.268.
- Blackstone, Bernard. "Some notes on Lancelot Andrewes." *Theology* 53:357 (1950), pp.94-101.
- Blackstone, Bernard. "A Paper by George Herbert." *Times Literary Supplement* 1802 (15 August 1936), p.664.
- Blackstone, Bernard. "Discord at Little Gidding." *Times Literary Supplement* 1800 (1 August 1936), p.628.
- Blackstone, Bernard. "Carlyle and Little Gidding [letter]." *Times Literary Supplement* 1783 (28 March 1936), p.238.
- Blackstone, Bernard. "Story-Books of Little Gidding: Wine and Poetry." *Times Literary Supplement* 1781 (21 March 1936), p.238.
- Bond, Edward L. *Damned Souls in a Tobacco Colony: Religion in Seventeenth-Century Virginia*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000.
- Bond, Edward L. "England's Soteriological Empire and the Roots of Colonial Identity in Early Virginia." *Anglican and Episcopal History* 66:4 (1997), pp.471-99.
- Booy, David. *Personal disclosures: an anthology of self-writings from the seventeenth-century*. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002.
- Bossy, John. "Blood and baptism: kinship, community and Christianity in western Europe from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries" in Derek Baker (ed.) *Studies in Church History 10: Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1973, pp.129-144.
- Botelho, Lynn and Thane, Pat (eds). *Women and Ageing in British Society since 1500*. London: Addison Wesley Longmans, 2000.
- Boutcher, Warren V. "Literature, Thought or Fact? Past and Present Directions in the

- Study of the Early Modern Letter” in Van Houdt, Toon et al. (eds). *Self-Presentation and Social Identification: The Rhetoric and Pragmatics of Letter Writing in Early Modern Times*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002, pp.137-63.
- Bouyer, Louis. *A History of Christian Spirituality, Vol. III: Orthodox Spirituality and Protestant and Anglican Spirituality*. New York: Crossroad, Seabury Press, 1969.
- Brandreth, Henry T. *OGS: A History of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd*. Chatteris: Beaumont Press, 1958.
- Bray, Alan. *The Friend*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Bray, Alan. “Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England.” *History Workshop Journal* 29 (1990), pp.1-19.
- Broad, John. *Transforming English Rural Society: The Verneys and the Claydons, 1600-1820*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Brown, Andrew J. *Robert Ferrar: Yorkshire Monk, Reformation Bishop and Martyr in Wales (c.1500-1555)*. London: Inscriptor Imprints, 1997.
- Burnett, Mark Thornton. “Apprentice Literature and the ‘Crisis’ of the 1590s.” *Yearbook of English Studies* 21 (1991), pp.27-38.
- Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food for Medieval Women*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Bynum, Caroline Walker. “‘... And Woman his Humanity’: Female Imagery in the Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages” in Bynum, Caroline Walker, Harrell, Stevan and Richman, Paula (eds). *Gender and Religion: on the complexity of symbols*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1986.
- Cabot, Nancy G. “The Illustrations of the First Little Gidding Concordance.” *Harvard Library Bulletin* 3:139-42 (Winter 1949).
- Carlton, Charles. *Charles I, The Personal Monarch*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.
- Carroll, Ruth et al. “Introduction.” Hiltunen, Risto and Skaffari, Janne (eds). *Discourse Perspectives on English. Medieval to Modern*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2003, pp.1-12.
- Carter, Jane Frances Mary. *Life and Letters of the Rev. T. T. Carter: hon. canon of Christchurch, Oxford, and warden of the House of Mercy, Clewer*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911.
- Carter, Jane Frances Mary. *The life and times of John Kettlewell: with details of the history of the Nonjurors*. Ed. Carter, T.T. London and New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1895.
- [Carter, Jane Frances Mary.] *Nicholas Ferrar: His Household and Friends*. Ed. Carter, T.T. London: Longmans and Co., 1892.
- Cavallo, Guglielmo and Chartier, Roger (eds). *A History of Reading in the West*. Trans. Cochrane, Lydia G. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.
- Cavallo, Sandra and Warner, Lyndan (eds). *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Harlow: Longman, 1999.
- Charles, Amy M. “Herbert and the Ferrars: Spirituall Edification” in Miller, Edmund and DiYanni, Robert (eds). *Like Season’d Timber: New Essays on George Herbert*. New York: Peter Lang, 1987, pp.1-18.
- Charlton, Kenneth. *Women, Religion and Education in Early Modern England*. London and New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Chartier, Roger. “Introduction: An Ordinary Kind of Writing. Model letters and letter-writing in *ancien régime* France” in Chartier, Alain Boureau and Cécile Dauphin (eds). *Correspondence: Models of Letter-Writing from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*. Trans. Woodall, Christopher. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- Church of the Good Shepherd, Arbury, Cambridge.
<http://www.churchofthegoodshepherd.co.uk/>
- Clarke, Elizabeth R. “The Character of a Non-Laudian Country Parson”. *Review of English Studies*. New series. 54:216 (2003), pp.479-96.

- Clayton, J.F. "The Tercentenary of Nicholas Ferrar." *Modern Churchman* 28:12 (March 1939), pp.513-6.
- Coady, Mary Frances. "Little Gidding: 'Where Prayer Has Been Valid'." *Commonweal* 115 (23 September 1988), pp.501-2.
- Cohen, Elizabeth S. "Between Oral and Written Culture: The Social Meaning of an Illustrated Love Letter" in Diefendorf, Barbara B. and Hesse, Carla (eds). *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800): Essays in Honor of Natalie Zemon Davis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993, pp.181-201.
- Collett, Henry. *Little Gidding and Its Founder: An Account of the Religious Community Established by Nicholas Ferrar in the XVIIth Century*. London: SPCK, 1925.
- Collett, John Dunlap. *Genealogy of the Descendants of John Collett, Born 1578, Died March 29th, 1659, of Little Gidding and London, England, and United States of America*. Greenfield, Indiana, 1929.
- Collinson, Patrick. *The Religion of Protestants: the Church in English society, 1559-1625*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1982.
- Collinson, Patrick. "'A magazine of religious patterns': an Erasmian topic transposed in English protestantism" in Baker, Derek (ed.) *Studies in Church History 14: Renaissance and Renewal in Christian History*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1977, pp.223-250.
- Community of Christ the Sower, Luverne, Alabama. <http://www.christthesower.org/>
- Conley, Thomas M. *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Cook, Harold J. "Good Advice and Little Medicine: The Professional Authority of Early Modern English Physicians." *Journal of British Studies* 33:1 (January 1994), pp.1-31.
- Countryman, William L. *The Poetic Imagination: An Anglican Spiritual Tradition*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999.
- Craig, C. Leslie. *Nicholas Ferrar, Junior: A Linguist of Little Gidding*. London: Epworth Press, 1950.
- Craig, C. Leslie. "The Earliest Little Gidding Concordance." *Harvard Library Bulletin* 1:3 (Autumn 1947), pp.311-31.
- Crawford, Patricia. *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Crawford, Patricia. "'The only ornament in a woman': needlework in early modern England" in *All Her Labours: Volume 2, Embroidering the Framework*. Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1984, pp.7-20.
- Cropper, Margaret. *Flame touches flame*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947.
- Curtius, Ernst Robert. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Trans. Trask, Willard R. London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953.
- Davenport, Cyril. "Embroidered Bindings of Bibles in the Possession of the British and Foreign Bible Society", *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 4:12 (1904), pp.267-80.
- Davenport, Cyril. "Three Recently Discovered Bookbindings with Little Gidding Stamps." *Library: A Quarterly Review of Bibliography and Library Lore* 1 (1899-1900), p.205.
- Davenport, Cyril. "Little Gidding Bindings." *Bibliographica* 2:6 (1896), pp.129-49.
- Davidoff, Leonore. *Worlds between: historical perspectives on gender and class*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995.
- Davidson, Clifford. "George Herbert and the architecture of Anglican worship." *Anglican Theological Review* 84:4 (Fall 2002), pp.853-72.
- Davidson, Martin. "The Oratory of the Good Shepherd" (pamphlet, c.1962, Lambeth Palace Library).
- Davies, Horton. *Worship and Theology in England, Vol II: From Andrewes to Baxter and Fox, 1603-1690*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975.
- Daybell, James. "Recent Studies in Sixteenth-Century Letters." *English Literary Renaissance* 35:2 (2005), pp.331-362.

- Daybell, James (ed.) *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*. Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001.
- Dillon, Anne. *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community, 1537-1603*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.
- Dobson, Mary J. *Contours of Death and Disease in Early Modern England*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Doelman, James. "An Unnoted Funeral Epitaph by Nicholas Ferrar." *Notes and Queries*. New series. 39 (December 1992), p.446.
- Doerksen, Daniel W. "Nicholas Ferrar, Arthur Woodnoth, and the Publication of George Herbert's *The Temple*." *George Herbert Journal* 3:1-2 (1979-80), pp.22-44.
- Duffy, Eamon. "Holy Maydens, Holy Wyfes: The Cult of Women Saints in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century England" in Sheils, W.J. and Wood, D. (eds). *Studies in Church History 27: Women in the Church*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp.175-96.
- Dumonceaux, P. "Le XVIIe siècle: aux origines de la lettre intime et du genre épistolaire" in Bonnat, J.-L. (ed.) *Ecrire, publier, lire. Les correspondances*. Paris: Distique, 1983, pp.289-302.
- Dyck, Paul. "'So rare a use': Scissors, Reading, and Devotion at Little Gidding." *George Herbert Journal* 27:1 and 2 (Fall 2003/Spring 2004), pp.67-81.
- Eales, Jacqueline. "Gender construction in early modern England and the conduct books of William Whately (1583-1639)" in Swanson, R.N. (ed.) *Studies in Church History 34: Gender and Christian Religion*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1998, pp.163-74.
- Eales, Jacqueline. *Puritans and Roundheads: The Harleys of Brampton Bryan and the Outbreak of the English Civil War*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Eales, Jacqueline. "Samuel Clarke and the 'Lives' of Godly Women in Seventeenth-Century England" in Sheils, W.J. and Wood, D. (eds). *Studies in Church History 27: Women in the Church*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, pp.365-76.
- Earle, Peter. *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life in London, 1660-1730*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
- Earle, Rebecca (ed.) *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.
- Ellison, James. *George Sandys: Travel, Colonialism and Tolerance in the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2002.
- Erickson, Amy Louise. *Women and Property in Early Modern England*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Este. "Charles I at Little Gidding." *Notes and Queries*. Eighth series. 7 (January-June 1895), pp.321-22.
- Evans, G.R. and Wright, J. Robert. *The Anglican Tradition: A Handbook of Sources*. London: SPCK, 1991.
- Favret, Mary A. *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics, and the Fiction of Letters*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Ferrar House, Little Gidding. <http://www.ferrarhouse.org.uk/>
- Ferrar, Michael Lloyd. "The Ferrar Papers." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 10 (1903), pp.130-38, 283-86, 414-18; 11 (1904), pp.41-46.
- Ferrar, W. J. "The Peace of Little Gidding." *Sunday Magazine*. New series. 28 (1899), p.116.
- Fielding, John. "Arminianism in the Localities: Peterborough Diocese, 1603-1642" in Fincham, Kenneth (ed.) *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993, pp.93-113.
- Fincham, Kenneth (ed.) *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642*. Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- Fitzmaurice, Andrew. "'Every man that prints, adventures': The Rhetoric of the Virginia Company Sermons" in Ferrell, L. and McCullough, P. (eds). *The English Sermon Revised: Religion, Literature and History, 1600-1750*. Manchester and New York:

- Manchester University Press, 2001, pp.24-42.
- Fitzmaurice, Andrew. "The civic solution to the crisis of English colonization, 1609-1625." *Historical Journal* 42 (1999), pp.25-51.
- Fitzmaurice, Susan M. *The Familiar Letter in Early Modern English: A pragmatic approach*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2002.
- Flather, Amanda. *Gender and Space in Early Modern England*. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer for the Royal Historical Society, 2007.
- Fletcher, Anthony. "Beyond the church: women's spiritual experience at home and in the community 1600-1900" in Swanson, R.N. (ed.) *Studies in Church History 34: Gender and Christian Religion*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1998, pp.187-203.
- Fletcher, Anthony. *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.
- Forbes, Mansfield Duval (ed.) *Clare College, 1326-1926; University Hall, 1326-1346; Clare Hall, 1346-1856*. Cambridge: printed for Clare College by Cambridge University Press, 1928.
- Foyster, Elizabeth. *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage*. London and New York: Longman, 1999.
- Freeman, Thomas S. "So Much at Stake: Martyrs and Martyrdom in Early Modern England" (review essay). *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 57:3 (2006), pp.535-41.
- Freeman, Thomas S. "Early modern martyrs" (review essay). *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52:4 (2001), pp.696-701.
- Froide, Amy M. *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005
- Froide, Amy M. "Marital Status as a Category of Difference: Singlewomen and Widows in Early Modern England" in Bennett, Judith and Froide, Amy (eds). *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, pp.236-69.
- Gibson, Jonathan. "Significant Space in Manuscript Letters." *Seventeenth Century* 12:1 (1997), pp.1-9.
- Gibson, William. *A Social History of the Domestic Chaplain, 1530-1840*. London and Herndon, VA: Leicester University Press, 1997.
- Gilroy, Amanda and Verhoeven, W.M. (eds). *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture*. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2000.
- Gonzalez, Francisco J. *Dialectic and Dialogue: Plato's Practice of Philosophical Inquiry*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998.
- Gordon, Lyndall. *Eliot's New Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.
- Gore, Charles. *Roman Catholic Claims*. 11th edition. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1920.
- Grassby, Richard. *Kinship and Capitalism: Marriage, Family, and Business in the English-Speaking World, 1580-1720*. Cambridge: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Grassby, Richard. "Love, Property and Kinship: The Courtship of Philip Williams, Levant Merchant, 1617-50". *English Historical Review* (April 1998), pp.335-50.
- Green, Ian. *Word, Image and Ritual: Protestant Instruction in Early Modern England* (provisional title), Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming.
- Green, Ian. *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Green, Ian. *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c.1530-1730*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Green, Lawrence D. "French Letters and English Anxiety in the Seventeenth Century." *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 66: 3 and 4 (2003), pp.263-74.
- Gregory, Brad S. *Salvation at Stake: Christian martyrdom in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge,

- Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Gregory, Jeremy. "Gender and the Clerical Profession in England, 1660-1850" in Swanson, R. N. (ed.) *Studies in Church History 34: Gender and Christian Religion*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1998, pp.235-71.
- Griffiths, Paul. *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.
- Grundy, Isobel and Wiseman, Susan (eds). *Women, writing, history, 1640-1740*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992.
- Guillén, Claudio. "Notes toward the Study of the Renaissance Letter" in Lewalski, Barbara Kiefer (ed.) *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1986, pp.70-101.
- Gurr, Andrew. *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*. Third edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Haigh, Christopher "The Church of England, the Catholics and the people" in Haigh, C. (ed.) *The Reign of Elizabeth I*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984.
- Handley, Paul. *The English Spirit: The Little Gidding Anthology of English Spirituality*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd in association with Little Gidding Books, 1987.
- Hare, Susan M. "The Records of the Goldsmiths' Company". *Archives* 16:72 (October 1984), pp.376-84.
- Harley, David. "The Theology of Affliction and the Experience of Sickness in the Godly Family, 1650-1714: The Henrys and the Newcomes" in Grell, Ole Peter and Cunningham, Andrew (eds). *Religio Medici: Religion and Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England*. Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996.
- Harris, Frances. *Transformations of Love: The Friendship of John Evelyn and Margaret Godolphin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Harrison, A. W. *Arminianism*. London: Duckworth, 1937.
- Hart, A. Tindal. *The Country Clergy in Elizabethan and Stuart Times, 1558-1660*. London: Phoenix House Ltd., 1958.
- Harvey, Karen and Shepard, Alexandra. "What Have Historians Done with Masculinity?" Reflections on Five Centuries of British History, circa 1500-1950". *Journal of British Studies* 44 (April 2005), pp.272-80.
- Harvey, Richard. "The problem of social-political obligation for the Church of England in the Seventeenth Century." *Church History* 40 (1971), pp.156-69.
- Hasselberg, Ylva. "Letters, social networks and the embedded economy in Sweden: some remarks on the Swedish bourgeoisie, 1800-1850" in Earle, Rebecca (ed.), *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, pp.95-107
- Head, Mrs [Ruth]. "English Secular Embroidery of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." *Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs* 4:11 (1904), pp.168-74.
- Heal, Sir Ambrose. *The London Goldsmiths 1200-1800*. Cambridge: University Press, 1935.
- Heal, Felicity. *Hospitality in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- Heal, Felicity and Holmes, Clive. *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700*. Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1994.
- Henderson, Judith Rice. "Humanist Letter Writing: Private Conversation or Public Forum?" in Van Houdt, Toon et al. (eds). *Self-Presentation and Social Identification: The Rhetoric and Pragmatics of Letter Writing in Early Modern Times*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002, pp.17-38.
- Henderson, Judith Rice. "Defining the Genre of the Letter: Juan Luis Vives' *De conscribendis epistolis*." *Renaissance and Reformation*. New series. 13 (1989), pp.299-312.
- Henderson, Judith Rice. "Erasmus and the Art of Letter-Writing" in Murphy, James J. (ed.) *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983, pp.331-55.
- Hill, Bridget. "A Refuge from Men: The Idea of a Protestant Nunnery." *Past and Present* 117 (November 1987), pp.107-30.

- Hill, Christopher. *Economic Problems of the Church: From Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963 (1956).
- Hill, Christopher. *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*. London: Temple Smith, 1972.
- Hodgkin, Katharine. "Thomas Whythorne and the Problems of Mastery." *History Workshop Journal* 29 (1990), pp.20-41.
- Holmes, Clive. *The Eastern Association in the English Civil War*. London: Cambridge, 1974.
- Holmes-Walker, Anthony. *Sixes and Sevens: A Short History of the Skinners' Co*. London: The Skinners' Co., 2005.
- Hornbeak, Katherine Gee. "The Complete Letter Writer in England, 1568-1800." *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages* 15:3-4 (1934).
- Houlbrooke, Ralph. *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Houlbrooke, Ralph (ed.) *Death, Ritual, and Bereavement*. London and New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Houlbrooke, Ralph (ed.) *English Family Life: An Anthology from Diaries*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- Houlbrooke, Ralph. *The English Family 1450-1700*. London and New York: Longman, 1984.
- Hoy, Peter and Rigby, Graham. "Little Gidding Bindings." *American Notes and Queries* 7 (October 1968), pp.24-26.
- Hunt, Arnold. "The Lord's Supper in Early Modern England." *Past and Present* 161 (November 1998), pp.39-83.
- Hunter, L. and Hutton, S. *Women, Science, and Medicine, 1500-1700: Mothers and Sisters of the Royal Society*. London: Sutton, 1997.
- Hussey, Maurice (ed.) "'The Arminian nunnery' (1641)". *Church Quarterly Review* 148 (1949), pp.229-36.
- Hyde, A. G. "Nicholas Ferrar and Little Gidding" in his *George Herbert and His Times*. London: Methuen; New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1906.
- Jackson, G. "The Ferrars of Little Gidding." *Expository Times* (August 1916).
- Jagodzinski, Cécile. *Privacy and Print: Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-Century England*. Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1999.
- Jankowski, Theodora A. *Pure Resistance: Queer Virginity in Early Modern English Drama*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.
- Jardine, Lisa. *Erasmus, Man of Letters: The Construction of Charisma in Print*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Jones, James William Percy. *Little Gidding, St John the Divine*. Notes on Churches and Abbeys no.50, London: SPCK, 1931.
- Keen, Maurice. *English Society in the Later Middle Ages, 1348-1500*. London: Penguin, 1990.
- Kermode, Frank and Kermode, Anita (eds). *The Oxford Book of Letters*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- King, Peter. "The reasons for the abolition of the Book of Common Prayer in 1645." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 21 (1970), pp.327-29.
- Kirchberger, Clare. "A link with Little Gidding." *Theology* 52:350 (1949), pp.294-8.
- Kitching, C.J. "'Prayers Fit For the Time': Fasting and Prayer in Response to National Crises in the Reign of Elizabeth I" in Sheils, W.J. (ed.) *Studies in Church History* 22: *Monks, Hermits and the Ascetic Tradition*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985, pp.241-50.
- Knox, R. Buick. "Bishop John Hacket and his teaching on sanctity and secularity" in Baker, Derek (ed.) *Studies in Church History* 10: *Sanctity and Secularity: The Church and the World*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1973, pp.165-172.
- Lake, Peter. *Anglicans and Puritans? : Presbyterianism and English conformist thought from Whitgift to Hooker*. London and Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988.
- Lake, Peter. "Feminine Piety and Personal Potency: The 'Emancipation' of Mrs Jane

- Ratcliffe." *Seventeenth Century* 2 (1987), pp.143-63.
- Lake, Peter. "Puritan Identities" [review]. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), pp.112-23.
- Lake, Peter and Questier, Michael (eds). *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c.1560-1660*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 2000.
- Lamont, William M. *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion, 1603-60*. London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969.
- Lane, Joan. *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914*. London: University College London Press, 1996.
- Laqueur, Thomas. *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- Larminie, Vivienne. "Fighting for Family in a Patronage Society: the Epistolary Armoury of Anne Newdigate (1574 – 1618)" in Daybell, James (ed.) *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing*. Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001, pp.94-108.
- Larminie, Vivienne. *Wealth, Kinship, and Culture: the Seventeenth-Century Newdigates of Arbury and Their World*. New York: Boydell, 1995.
- Laurence, Anne. "Daniel's Practice: The Daily Round of Godly Women in Seventeenth-Century England" in Swanson, R.N. (ed.) *Studies in Church History 37: The Use and Abuse of Time in Christian History*. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2002, pp.173-83.
- Laureys, M. et al. (eds). *The World of Justus Lipsius*. Brussels and Rome: Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome 68, 1998.
- Lawson, Philip. *The East India Company: A History*. London & New York: Longman, 1993.
- Little Gidding Church. <http://www.littlegiddingchurch.org.uk/>
- Little Gidding Prayer Book, The*. London: SPCK, 1986.
- Longfellow, Erica. "Public, Private, and the Household in Early Seventeenth-Century England". *Journal of British Studies* 45 (April 2006), pp.313-34.
- Love, Harold. *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
- Loverci, Francesca. "L'Enigma di Little Gidding: La Comunità Spirituale di Nicholas Ferrar." *Clio* 35:1 (1999), pp.5-25.
- MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *The Later Reformation in England, 1547-1603*. Second edn. Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001.
- MacCulloch, Diarmaid. "The Myth of the English Reformation." *Journal of British Studies* 30 (1991), pp.1-19.
- Macek, Ellen A. "'Ghostly Fathers' and their 'Virtuous Daughters': The Role of Spiritual Direction in the Lives of Three Early Modern English Women." *Catholic Historical Review* 90:2 (April 2004), pp.213-35.
- Malcolm, Noel. "Hobbes, Sandys and the Virginia Company." *Historical Journal* 24:2 (June 1981), pp.297-321.
- Malherbe, Abraham (comp. and trans.) *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988.
- Maltby, Judith. "'The Good Old Way': Prayer Book Protestantism in the 1640s and 1650s" in Swanson, R.N. (ed.) *Studies in Church History 38: The Church and the Book*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 2004, pp.255-56.
- Maltby, Judith. *Prayer book and people in Elizabethan and early Stuart England*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Manguel, Alberto. *A History of Reading*. London: Flamingo, 1997.
- Manning, Ruth. "A Confessor and His Spiritual Child: François de Sales, Jeanne de Chantal, and the Foundation of the Order of the Visitation" in Harris, Ruth and Roper, Lyndal (eds). *The Art of Survival: Gender and History in Europe, 1450-2000: Essays in Honour of Olwen Hufton*. Oxford: Oxford Journals, 2006, pp.102-17.
- Marcus, Leah S. "Pastimes and the Purging of Theatre" in Kaplan, David Scott and Stallybrass, Peter (eds). *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and*

- Jacobean Drama*. New York and London: Routledge, 1991, pp.196-209.
- Marcus, Leah S. *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell and the Defence of the Old Holiday Pastimes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Markus, Manfred. "The Development of Prose in Early Modern English in View of the Gender Question: Using Grammatical Idiosyncrasies of 15th and 17th Century Letters." *European Journal of English Studies* 5:2 (2001), pp.181-196.
- Marshall, Emma. *A Haunt of Ancient Peace: Memories of Mr. Nicholas Ferrar's House at Little Gidding, and of His Friends Dr Donne and Mr George Herbert. A Story*. New York: Macmillan, 1896; London: Seeley and Co., 1897.
- Marshall, Emma. *Under Salisbury Spire, in the days of George Herbert: the recollections of Magdalene Wydeville*. London: Seeley and Co., 1890.
- Marshall, Emma. *In the East Country with Sir Thomas Browne [A Story]*. London: Seeley and Co., 1884.
- Marshall, J. S. *Hooker and the Anglican Tradition: an historical and theological study of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity*. London: Black, 1963.
- Marshall, W. Gerald (ed. and intro.) *The Restoration Mind*. Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1997.
- Marshall, W. Gerald. "The Interpenetrations of Time: Izaak Walton and the Transformation of Hagiography" in W. G. Marshall (ed. and intro.) *The Restoration Mind*. Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1997, pp.193-206.
- Martin, Jessica. *Walton's Lives: Conformist Commemorations and the Rise of Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Maycock, A. L. "Little Gidding Discovery." *Times Literary Supplement*, 3335 (27 January 1966), p.72.
- Maycock, A. L. *The Story of Little Gidding*. London: SPCK, 1947.
- Maycock, A. L. *Chronicles of Little Gidding*. London: SPCK, 1954.
- Maycock, A. L. *Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding*. London: SPCK, 1938.
- Mayor, J. E. B. "George Herbert and Nicholas Ferrar." *Notes and Queries* 10 (22 July 1854), pp.58-9.
- McAdoo, H.R. *The Spirit of Anglicanism*. London: Black, 1965.
- McCabe, William H. *An Introduction to the Jesuit Theater*. Ed. Oldani, Louis J. St Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1983.
- Mendelson, Sara and Crawford, Patricia. *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Merchant, W. M. "Donne's sermon to the Virginia Company" in Smith, A. J. (ed.) *John Donne, Essays in Celebration*. London: Methuen, 1972.
- Mergal, Angel M. (ed.) *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press; London: SCM Press, 1957.
- Miller, Peter N. "The "Antiquarianization" of Biblical Scholarship and the London Polyglot Bible (1653-57)". *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 62:3 (2001), pp.463-82.
- Milton, Anthony. *Catholic and Reformed: the Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Mingay, G. E. *The Gentry: The Rise and Fall of a Ruling Class*. London and New York: Longman, 1976.
- Mitchell, Linda C. "Entertainment and Instruction: Women's Roles in the English Epistolary Tradition." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 66: 3 and 4 (2003), pp.331-347.
- Moore, Susan Hardman. "Sexing the Soul: Gender and the rhetoric of puritan piety" in Swanson, R.N. (ed.) *Studies in Church History 34: Gender and Christian Religion*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1998, pp.175-86.
- Moore, William W. *The Little Church That Refused to Die: History of the Church at Little Gidding, England*. Princeton Theological Monograph Series, 35. Allison Park: Pickwick

- Publications, 1993.
- Moorman, J. R. H. *The Anglican Spiritual Tradition*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983.
- Morgan, Edmund S. "Puritan Hostility to the Theatre." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 110:5 (October 1966), pp.340-347.
- Morrill, J. S. "The English Church in the Seventeenth Century." *History Review* 30 (1988), pp.18-23.
- Morrill, J. S. *Reactions to the English Civil War, 1642-1649*. London: Macmillan, 1982.
- Morrill, J. S. *Cheshire 1630-1660: County Government and Society during the English Revolution*. London and New York: Oxford, 1974.
- Morrill, John, Slack, P. and Woolf, D. (eds). *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England: Essays Presented to G.E. Aylmer*. Oxford: Clarendon; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Mumm, S.D. "Writing for their Lives: Women Applicants to the Royal Literary Fund, 1840-1880." *Publishing History* 27 (1990), pp.27-48.
- Nellen, Henk J. M. "In Strict Confidence: Grotius' Correspondence with his Socinian Friends" in Van Houdt, Toon et al. (eds). *Self-Presentation and Social Identification: The Rhetoric and Pragmatics of Letter Writing in Early Modern Times*. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002.
- Nevalainen, Terttu. "Continental conventions in early English correspondence" in Diller, Hans-Jürgen and Görlach, Manfred (eds). *Towards a History of English as a History of Genres*. Heidelberg: C. Winter, 2001, pp.203-224.
- "Nicholas Ferrar and Little Gidding." *Church Eclectic* 20 (1892-3), pp.1087-89.
- "Nicholas Ferrar and Little Gidding." *Church Quarterly Review* 35 (January 1893), pp.460-71.
- "Nicholas Ferrar, Little Gidding, and the Bookbinding by the Nuns." *Bookworm* 3 (November 1890), p.366.
- Nicolson, Adam. *Power and Glory: Jacobean England and the Making of the King James Bible*. London: HarperCollins, 2003.
- Nies, Fritz. "Un genre féminin?" *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 78 (1978), pp.994-1003.
- Nightingale, Andrea Wilson. *Genres in Dialogue: Plato and the Construct of Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Nixon, Howard M. "A Little Gidding Binding, c.1635-40". *Book Collector* 11 (1962), p.330.
- Noble, William M. *Huntingdonshire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911.
- Novarr, David. *The Making of Walton's Lives*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958.
- Nurmi, Arja. "The Corpus of Early English Correspondence Sampler (CEECS)." *ICAME Journal* 23 (1999), pp.53-64.
- Nuttall, Geoffrey F. "Overcoming the world: the early Quaker programme" in Baker, Derek (ed.) *Studies in Church History 10: Sanctity and Secularity: the Church and the World*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1973, pp.145- 164.
- O'Connor, Mary. "Representations of intimacy in the life-writing of Anne Clifford and Anne Dormer" in Coleman, Patrick, Lewis, Jayne and Kowalik, Jill (eds). *Representations of the Self from the Renaissance to Romanticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp.79-96.
- O'Day, Rosemary. "Tudor and Stuart Women: their Lives through their Letters" in Daybell, James (ed.) *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2001.
- O'Day, Rosemary. *Education and Society, 1500-1800: The Social Foundations of Education in Early Modern Britain*. London and New York: Longman, 1982.
- O'Day, Rosemary. *The English Clergy: The Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession, 1558-1642*. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979.
- O'Day, Rosemary and Heal, Felicity (eds). *Princes and Paupers in the English Church, 1500-1800*. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1981.
- Ollard, Richard and Tudor-Craig, Pamela (eds). *For Veronica Wedgwood These: Studies in*

- Seventeenth Century History*. London: Collins, 1986.
- Oratory of the Good Shepherd. <http://www.ogs.net/>
- Page, William and Proby, Granville (eds). "Appendix: Little Gidding." *The Victoria History of the County of Huntingdon*. Folkestone: published for the University of London Institute of Historical Research, 1926, pp.399-406.
- Palmer, H. P. "Nicholas Ferrar and the Religious Society at Little Gidding." *Good Words* 30 (1889), p.256.
- Parker, Rozsika. *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*. London: Women's Press, 1984.
- Parrish, Paul A. "Richard Crashaw, Mary Collet, and the 'Arminian Nunnery' of Little Gidding" in Summers, Claude J. and Peabworth, Ted-Larry (eds). *Representing Women in Renaissance England*. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1997, pp.187-200.
- Parrish, Paul A. "Reading Poets Reading Poets: Herbert and Crashaw's Literary Ellipse" in Summers, Claude J. and Peabworth, Ted-Larry (eds). *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England*. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2000, pp.115-37.
- Patterson, Annabel. "The very name of the game: theories of order and disorder" in Healy, Thomas and Sawday, Jonathan (eds). *Literature and the English Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp.21-37.
- Peters, Christine. "Single women in early modern England: attitudes and expectations", *Continuity and Change* 12:3 (1997), pp.325-45.
- Peters, Kate. "'Women's Speaking Justified': Women and discipline in the early Quaker movement" in Swanson, R.N. (ed.) *Studies in Church History 34: Gender and Christian Religion*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer for the Ecclesiastical History Society, 1998, pp.205-34.
- Pollock, Linda (ed.) *With faith and physic: the life of a Tudor gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay, 1552-1620*. London: Collins and Brown, 1993.
- Pollock, Linda. "'Teach her to Live Under Obedience': The Making of Women in the Upper Ranks of Early Modern England." *Continuity and Change* 4 (1989), pp.231-58.
- Pollock, Linda (comp.) *A Lasting Relationship: Parents and Children over Three Centuries*. London: Fourth Estate, 1986.
- Potter, Ursula. "Performing Arts in the Tudor Classroom" in Kermode, Lloyd, Scott-Warren, Jason and Van Elk, Martine (eds). *Tudor Drama Before Shakespeare, 1495-1590: new directions for research, criticism, and pedagogy*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp.143-65.
- Powell, Chilton Latham. *English Domestic Relations, 1487-1653: a study of matrimony and family life in theory and practice as revealed by the literature, law, and history of the period*. New York: Russell and Russell, 1972 (1917).
- Powell, Neil. *At Little Gidding – a poem*. Rushden: Sceptre Press, 1974.
- Prest, W. R. *The Inns of Court under Elizabeth I and the Early Stuarts, 1590-1640*. London: Longman, 1972.
- Prestwich, Menna. *Cranfield, Politics and Profits under the Early Stuarts: The Career of Lionel Cranfield Earl of Middlesex*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966.
- Price, Jacob M. *Perry of London: Family and Firm on the Seaborne Frontier, 1615-1753*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Prior, Mary (ed.) *Women in English Society, 1500-1800*. London and New York: Routledge, 1985.
- Project Canterbury (Anglican History online). <http://anglicanhistory.org/>
- Pursell, Brennan. "James I, Gondomar and the dissolution of the parliament of 1621." *History* 85:279 (2000), pp.428-45.
- Rabb, Theodore K. *Jacobean Gentleman: Sir Edwin Sandys, 1561-1629*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.

- Rabb, Theodore K. *Enterprise and Empire: Merchant and Gentry Investment in the Expansion of England, 1572-1630*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967.
- Ransome, David R. "'Shipt for Virginia': The Beginnings in 1619-22 of the Great Migration to the Chesapeake." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 105 (1995), pp.443-59.
- Ransome, David R. "John Ferrar of Little Gidding." *Records of Huntingdonshire* 3:8 (2000), pp.16-24.
- Ransome, Joyce. "Monotessaron: The Harmonies of Little Gidding." *Seventeenth Century* 20:1 (April 2005), pp 22-52.
- Ransome, Joyce. "Prelude to Piety: Nicholas Ferrar's Grand Tour." *Seventeenth Century* 18 (April 2003), pp.1-24.
- Ransome, Joyce. "Little Gidding in 1796." *Records of Huntingdonshire* 3:9 (2001-2), pp.13-28.
- Rappaport, Steve. *Worlds Within Worlds: Structures of Life in Sixteenth-Century London*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Rees Jones, Sarah et al. "The Later Medieval English Urban Household." *History Compass* 5:1 (November 2006), pp.112-158. [doi:10.1111/j.1478-0542.2006.00364.x]
- Reiter, Robert E. "George Herbert and His Biographers." *Cithara* 9 (1970), pp.18-31.
- Richmond, Colin. *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: Endings*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Richmond, Colin. *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: Fastolf's Will*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Richmond, Colin. *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: The First Phase*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Robertson, Jean. *The Art of Letter Writing: An Essay on the Handbooks Published in England during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. London: University Press of Liverpool and Hodder and Stoughton, 1942.
- Roper, Michael. "Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History." *History Workshop Journal* 59 (2005), pp.57-72.
- Rowell, Geoffrey, Stevenson, Kenneth and Williams, Rowan (eds). *Love's Redeeming Work: the Anglican quest for holiness*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Rowse, A.L. *Shakespeare's Southampton: Patron of Virginia*. London: Macmillan, 1965.
- Schaffer, Simon. "Piety, Physic and Prodigious Abstinence" in Grell, Ole Peter and Cunningham, Andrew (eds). *Religio Medici: Religion and Medicine in Seventeenth-Century England*. Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1996, pp.171-203.
- Schochet, Gordon. *Patriarchalism in Political Thought: the authoritarian family and political speculation and attitudes especially in seventeenth-century England*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1975.
- Schuchard, Ronald. "'If I Think, Again, of This Place': Eliot, Herbert, and the Way to 'Little Gidding'" in Lobb, Edward (ed.) *Words in Time: New Essays on Eliot's Four Quartets*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993, pp.52-83.
- Schwarz, M.L. "Lay Anglicanism and the crisis of the English Church in the early seventeenth century." *Albion* 14 (1982), pp.1-19.
- Scott, Joan Wallach. *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.
- Seeman, Eric. "'It is Better to Marry than to Burn': Anglo-American Attitudes Toward Celibacy, 1600-1800." *Journal of Family History* 24:4 (1999), pp.397-419.
- Seth-Smith, Elsie Kathleen. *The Way of Little Gidding*. London: H. R. Allenson, 1914.
- Shapiro, I.A. Letter to the editor. *Review of English Studies*, new series, 21:84 (November 1970), pp.472-3.
- Sharland, Emily Cruwys. "Richard Crashaw and Mary Collett." *Church Quarterly Review* 73 (January 1912), p.359.
- Sharpe, Kevin. *The Personal Rule of Charles I*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Sharpe, Pamela. "Literally Spinsters: A New Interpretation of Local Economy and Demography in Colyton in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries." *Economic*

- History Review* 44:1 (1991), pp.46-65.
- Sheldrake, Philip F. "Distinctive or all-embracing? Retrieving the foundations of an Anglican spirituality in a postmodern era." *Anglican Theological Review* 84:4 (Fall 2002), pp.839-53.
- Sheldrake, Philip F. *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, Identity*. London: SCM Press, 2001.
- Sheldrake, Philip F. *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method*. New edition. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995.
- Shell, Alison. "'Furor juvenilis': post-Reformation English Catholicism and exemplary youthful behaviour" in Shagan, Ethan (ed.) *Catholics and the Protestant Nation*. Manchester and New York: University of Manchester Press, 2005, pp.185-206.
- Shell, Alison. *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination 1558-1660*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Shepard, Alexandra. "From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500-1700". *Journal of British Studies* 44 (April 2005), pp.281-95.
- Shepard, Alexandra. *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Shepard, Alexandra. "Manhood, Credit and Patriarchy in Early Modern England, c.1580-1640." *Past and Present* 167 (May 2000), pp.75-106.
- Shepard, Alexandra and Withington, P. J. *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Shorthouse, Joseph Henry. *John Inglesant: A Romance*. Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1880.
- Skinner, Quentin. "The Limits of Historical Explanations." *Philosophy* 41(1966), pp.199-215.
- Skipton, H. P. K. "Little Gidding and the Non-Jurors." *Church Quarterly Review* 93 (October 1921), pp.52-67.
- Skipton, H. P. K. *The Life and Times of Nicholas Ferrar*. London: A. R. Mowbray and Co., 1907.
- Slack, Paul. *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England*. London and New York: Longman, 1988.
- Slack, Paul. *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England*. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985.
- Slater, Miriam. *Family Life in the Seventeenth Century: the Verneys of Claydon House*. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.
- Smith, Hannah. "English 'Feminist' Writings and Judith Drake's *An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex* (1696)". *Historical Journal* 44:3 (September 2001), pp.727-47.
- Smith, Steven R. "The Ideal and the Reality: Apprentice-Master Relationships in Seventeenth Century London". *History of Education Quarterly* 21:4 (Winter 1981), pp.449-59.
- Smyth, Charles Hugh Egerton. "Little Gidding and Leighton Bromswold." *Church Quarterly Review* 165 (July-September 1964), pp.290-305.
- Sociolinguistics and Language History Project Team. *Corpus of Early English Correspondence Sampler (CEECS)* ©. Department of English, University of Helsinki, 1998.
- Sommerville, C. John. "Interpreting seventeenth-century English religion as movements." *Church History* 69:4 (2000), pp.749-69.
- Sommerville, Margaret. *Sex and Subordination: Attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society*. London and New York: E. Arnold, 1995.
- Stanwood, Paul G. "Community and Social Order in the Great Tew Circle" in Summers, Claude L. and Peabworth, Ted-Larry (eds). *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England*. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2000, pp.173-86.
- Steedman, Carolyn. "A woman writing a letter" in Earle, Rebecca (ed.) *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, pp.111-133.
- Stewart, Alan and Wolfe, Heather. *Letterwriting in Renaissance England*. Washington, D.C.: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 2004.

- Stewart, Stanley. "Herbert and the 'Harmonies' of Little Gidding." *Cithara* 24 (November 1984), pp.3-26.
- Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977.
- Stone, Lawrence. *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.
- Stoye, John. *English Travellers Abroad, 1604-1667*. Revised edn. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Strong, Roy. *The Tudor and Stuart Monarchy: Pageantry, Painting, Iconography*. 3 vols. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1997.
- Summers, Claude L. and Peabworth, Ted-Larry (eds). *Literary Circles and Cultural Communities in Renaissance England*. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2000.
- Summers, Claude L. and Peabworth, Ted-Larry (eds). *Representing Women in Renaissance England*. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1997.
- Sutton, Max Keith. "John Inglesant and 'Little Gidding'." *Yeats Eliot Review* 8 (1986), pp.119-22.
- Swanson, R. N. et al. (eds). *The Use and Abuse of Time in Christian History*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 2002.
- Sykes, S. W. *The Integrity of Anglicanism*. London: Mowbrays, 1978.
- Sykes, S. W. and Booty, J. E. (eds). *The Study of Anglicanism*. London and Philadelphia: SPCK/Fortress Press, 1988.
- Tadmor, Naomi. *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Tanskanen, Sanna-Kaisa. "Best patterns for your imitation?: Early modern letter-writing instruction and real correspondence" in Hiltunen, Risto and Skaffari, Janne (eds). *Discourse Perspectives on English. Medieval to Modern*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2003, pp.167-95.
- Tawney, R. H. *Business and Politics under James I: Lionel Cranfield as merchant and minister*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958.
- Tawney, R. H. "Harrington's Interpretation of his Age." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 27 (1941), pp.199-223.
- Tawney, R. H. "The Rise of the Gentry, 1558-1640." *Economic History Review* 11 (1941), pp.1-38.
- Thirsk, Joan. "The Fashioning of the Tudor-Stuart Gentry." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 72 (1990), pp.69-85.
- Thirsk, Joan. "Younger Sons in the Seventeenth Century." *History* 54 (1969), pp.358-77.
- Thomas, Keith. "Cases of Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England" in Morrill, John, et al. (eds.) *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England: Essays Presented to G.E. Aylmer*. Oxford: Clarendon; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp.29-56.
- Thomas, Keith. "Age and Authority in Early Modern England." *Proclamations of the British Academy* 62 (1977), pp.205-48.
- Tibbatts, George. *The Oratory of the Good Shepherd: The First Seventy-Five Years*. Windsor, Berks: The Almoner, OGS, 1988.
- Todd, Margo. "Humanists, puritans and the spiritualized household." *Church History* 49 (1980), pp.18-34.
- Toomer, G.J. *Eastern Wisdom and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
- Tosh, John. "What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-century Britain." *History Workshop Journal* 38 (1994), pp.179-202.
- Trevor-Roper, Hugh. *From Counter-Reformation to Glorious Revolution*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1992.
- Trevor-Roper, Hugh. *Catholics, Anglican, and Puritans: Seventeenth-Century Essays*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1987.

- Trevor-Roper, Hugh. *The Gentry, 1540-1640. Economic History Review*, Supplement 1 (1953).
- Tudor-Craig, Pamela. "Charles I and Little Gidding" in Ollard, Richard and Tudor-Craig, Pamela (eds). *For Veronica Wedgwood These Studies in Seventeenth Century History*. London: Collins, 1986, pp.174-87.
- Turner, Bryan. *Religion and Social Theory*. London; Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1991.
- Tyacke, Nicholas. *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c.1590-1640*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.
- Vickery, Amanda. "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History." *Historical Journal* 36:2 (1993), pp.383-414.
- Walford, E. "A Pilgrimage to Little Gidding." *Newbery House Magazine* 3 (July 1890), p.70.
- Walsh, John and Hyam, Ronald. "Peter Peckard: Liberal Churchman and Anti-Slave Trade Campaigner". *Magdalene College Occasional Papers* 16 (1998). Magdalene College, Cambridge.
- Walsham, Alexandra. "Translating Trent? English Catholicism and the Counter Reformation." *Historical Research* 78:201 (August 2005), pp.288-310.
- Walsham, Alexandra. *Providence in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Walsham, Alexandra. "The parochial roots of Laudianism revisited: Catholics, Anti-Calvinists and 'parish Anglicans' in early Stuart England." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 49 (1998), pp.620-51.
- Walsham, Alexandra. *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity, and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1993.
- Warnicke, Retha M. "Lady Mildmay's Journal: a study in autobiography and meditation in Reformation England." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 20:1 (1989), pp.55-68.
- Warrack, John. *German Opera: from the Beginnings to Wagner*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Watkins, Owen C. *The Puritan Experience*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972.
- Wear, Andrew. *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Weaver, Elissa B. *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Weir, David R. "Rather Never than Late: Celibacy and Age at Marriage in English Cohort Fertility." *Journal of Family History* 9:4 (1984), pp.340-54.
- Wiesner, Merry E. *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Wiesner-Hanks, Merry E. *Christianity and Sexuality in the Early Modern World: Regulating Desire, Reforming Practice*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Weyer, Robert van de (ed.) *The English Spirit: The Little Gidding Anthology of English Spirituality*. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1988.
- Weyer, Robert van de. *The Little Gidding Way*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1988.
- White, Helen C. "Richard Crashaw: Little Gidding to Rome" in her *The Metaphysical Poets: A Study in Religious Experience*. New York: Macmillan, 1936.
- Whyman, Susan. *Sociability and Power in Late Stuart England: The Cultural Worlds of the Verneys, 1660-1720*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Whyman, Susan. "Paper visits': the post-Restoration letter as seen through the Verney family archive" in Earle, Rebecca (ed.) *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, pp.15-36.
- Wickes, Michael. *A History of the Parish of Great Gidding, Steeple Gidding and Little Gidding*. Third edition. Bideford: Michael Wickes, 1979.
- Williams, A.T.P. *The Anglican Tradition in the Church of England*. London: SCM Press, 1947.
- Williams, George Walton. "Richard Crashaw and the Little Gidding Bookbinders." *Notes*

- and Queries*. New series. 3 (1956), pp.9-10.
- Wingren, Gustaf. *Luther on Vocation*. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957.
- Wolf, William J. *Anglican Spirituality*. Wilton, Conn.: Morehouse-Barlow Company, 1982.
- Wordsworth, Christopher. *Ecclesiastical Biography: or, Lives of Eminent Men Connected with the History of Religion in England from the Commencement of the Reformation to the Revolution*. 6 vols. London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1810.
- Wright, Louis. B. *Religion and Empire: The Alliance between Piety and Commerce in English Expansion, 1558-1625*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943.
- Wrightson, Keith. *English Society 1580-1680*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1982.
- Wrigley, E.A. and Schofield, Roger. *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Yates, Nigel. *Buildings, faith and worship: the liturgical arrangement of Anglican churches 1600-1900*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Yates, Nigel. *Ritualism in Victorian Britain, 1839-1910*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Young, B.W. "The Anglican Origins of Newman's Celibacy." *Church History* 65:1 (March 1996), pp.15-27.
- Zahedieh, N. 'Making Mercantilism Work: London Merchants and the Atlantic Trade in the Seventeenth Century.' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*. 6th series. 9 (1999), pp.143-58.

5. Unpublished theses

- Bigelow, Gordon Ellsworth. "The Relations between Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding and George Herbert and Richard Crashaw." Unpublished MA thesis. Johns Hopkins University, 1947.
- Flather, Amanda J. "The gendering of space in early modern Essex c.1580 to 1720". Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Essex, 2002.
- Maber, G.L. "Nicholas Ferrar and George Herbert: their work and times." Unpublished MA thesis. Manchester University, 1947.
- Potter, Ursula. "Pedagogy and Parenting in English Drama, 1560-1610: Flogging Schoolmasters and Cocking Mothers." Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Sydney, 2001. Available online: <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/356>
- Spurgeon, C.W. "J. Henry Shorthouse, the Author of 'John Inglesant' (with Reference to T. S. Eliot and C. G. Jung)." Unpublished PhD thesis. Birkbeck College, University of London, 1995.
- Williams, A. M. "*Conversations at Little Gidding. 'On the Retirement of Charles V.'* '*On the Austere Life.*'" Unpublished PhD thesis. Columbia University, 1972